

THE NEW

# Bluebook

JANUARY 1955

25 CENTS

**RAISE YOUR AVERAGE**  
20 PINS—Andy Varipapa

**Your Future Is \$40,000**  
Safer Than You Think

**TV STEVE ALLEN'S**  
First Short Story

scene from complete novel  
**THE HIGH PASSES**





## ***Gas Station Operator***



As family-man Bill Commons hustles through his 60-hour work-week, he may sometimes wonder if being a paratrooper in World War II was ever as rugged as running a service station in the middle of a price war. For a fascinating inside view of the world of the guy who polishes your windshield, turn to page 36.

# Bluebook

JANUARY, 1955

Vol. 100, No. 3

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*The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.*

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# POLITICS IS PEOPLE

By Robert Bendiner

A Congressman must approach his morning mail with a combination of dread and amusement. Not long ago, a Southern member of the House reports, he received a letter from a constituent saying that she had heard the government was giving loyalty checks. She was perfectly loyal, she complained, but had not yet received her check.



Would he please see that it was mailed to her in time for next month's rent?

**Harried householders** who try to keep their families on a budget can detect familiar sounds from Washington, where a grievous government is complaining these days that it just can't do the national housekeeping on a miserable 59 billion dollars a year.

It isn't that they aren't trying to pinch pennies down there. Why, says Secretary of State Dulles, at a recent European conference he purposely took "a small hotel room," trimmed his traveling staff to the bone, and even scratched out words in his messages home in order to cut down on cable costs.

George Humphrey has let it be known that he drives his own car around Washington instead of using the official limousine like all those extravagant Secretaries of the Treasury that preceded him. And as far as the President is concerned, he could—though he doesn't—make the point that it's a lot cheaper to putt around the White House lawn than to go yachting on the Potomac.

But, still, says the taxpayer who foots the bills, we're running close to five billion dollars in the red this year. How come?

"Uncontrollable costs," says Humphrey—and less income than he expected. At home that line reads, "Just go down to the stores and see for yourself what prices are—and, besides, dear, what ever happened to that raise you were going to get?"

Eventually, Humphrey says with a sigh, we will

balance the budget, but not right now. This has been the refrain of budget directors, Secretaries of the Treasury, and Chancellors of the Exchequer running back to a Pharaoh's steward named Joseph—and of housewives since the days of the late Mrs. Adam. Until the miracle occurs we may as well relax and adopt the suggestion of Artemus Ward: "Let us all be happy and live within our means, even if we have to borrow the money to do it with."

The ghost of Harold Ickes is sorely needed in Washington to deal with the latest outbreak of what he used to call "gobbledy-gook." This is the double-talk that afflicts public officials in every country, in all centuries, and regardless of politics. When subordinates complained to the chief of an information agency that they were tired of answering reporters' questions with "No comment" or "The Department is studying the question," this resourceful bureaucrat offered them free use of a formula he had worked out for the purpose. They could say, he suggested, with tongue in cheek if they preferred: "Until further notice this situation



will be treated with a studied lack of expression." Maybe you don't get paid much in government, but where else can you talk like that?

A whole new political vista, of a gandy sort, has been opened up in Oklahoma. A chap recently won a nomination for Lieutenant Governor of that state by legalizing his nickname, thus getting himself on the ballot with the colorful handle of Cowboy Pink Williams. Such was his success that his opponent immediately served notice of his intention to change his own name to Hopalong Cassidy Hurst.

The possibilities in this kind of thing are as glittering as they are obvious. The President



might take to signing historical documents with the legalized name of General Ike, or he might even decide to run again as Rocky Kansas. It isn't hard to imagine the Vice President getting himself permanently billed as Battling Kid Nixon, and the unexpected winner of the 1948 election might try a comeback under the *nom de ballot* of Hairbreadth Harry.

As a first name Kefauver would probably find Gangbuster an improvement over Estes. And for a hardy independent Senator what could look more intriguing on the voting machine than Lone Ranger Morse?

What's in a name, you say? Votes, man, votes.

### Wind Over Washington

(from the Congressional Record)

SENATOR DIRKSEN (R., Ill.) in a moment of gentle tranquility: As I think of this spirit of accord and amity and concord, I always think of the two deacons, the Republican and the Democrat, who were kneeling together in a little church in a small village in Illinois. The Republican deacon was praying to the Lord and saying, "O, Lord, make us Republicans hang together in accord; make us hang together in concord." And just then his Democratic brethren said, "Lord, any cord will do."

SENATOR NEELY (D., W.Va.) chides his fellow-Senators for talking too much: Mr. President, the Constitution forbids the infliction of cruel and unusual punishment such as the honorable artificers of verbosity have from time immemorial administered to the reticent working-members and attaches of the Senate . . . If the punishment for murdering sleep were similar to the punishment for murdering human beings, a number of ablebodied, energetic, tireless verbosity-mongers would be well on their way to the penitentiary, the gallows, or the electric chair . . . Ten members of this body have, with their verbosity, filled more pages of this monumental mass of Congressional Records than have been consumed by the remaining 86 silent Senators like me. . . . (and so on and on for four closely packed columns of the Record).

REPRESENTATIVE KING (R., Pa.) pleads that we fatten up to save the Republic: This country is literally choking with food and the distributing system has been so effective that even the lowest-income group is eating well. The number of hungry people, because of their inability to buy, is so small as to be insignificant . . . The only way to increase consumption within the United States is to popularize obesity.



### Misery Loves Company

Just finished reading Ralph Slone's article, "How Did This Happen To Me?" (September). I haven't finished laughing.

Being the father of five, I thought I had it rough. Now, just knowing about Ralph's predicament makes me feel ever so much better.

All kidding aside, my congratulations to Mr. Slone for his warm, forthright and humorous handling of a subject on which I recall not a printed word of honesty in the past. He will no doubt get some letters of reproach, but they will be from those who have the statistical "two and eight-tenths children," or less.

A. Park, Summyvale, Calif.

I deduce that Mr. Slone was either writing in a sensationalist style for the money or that he is a complete materialist.

He seems to forget that life is God-given and that there are many people in the world who keenly appreciate what he is mocking.

If the story was supposed to be funny, it failed.  
Robert L. Getz, Yeadon, Pa.

Amen to Ralph W. Slone's hilarious article (and three cheers to his wife!).

If that guy survives to write anything else, buy it. He's a genius—in spite of the statistics.

Mrs. James A. Holderman, San Manuel, Ariz.

### Readers Ride "Dondrino"

Tried to read "Death Rides the Dondrino," but gave it up. Why can't authors learn something of what they write?

I have had five brother guncranks call my attention to the errors in this story. I make six.

The 56 Sharp was not a heavily-loaded, long-range weapon, and would have been unsuited for large game. . . .

The Henry did not use a 44-40 rim-fire shell. No such shell was ever made. The Henry used a 44-28-200 rim-fire shell. . . .

W. R. Kaufman, Evanston, Ill.

Says the author, Joe Richmond: "Mr. Kaufman may be right on both points. I've done considerable research on old guns, but I am not infallible, of course. Even so, it is no earth-shaking catastrophe, and no just reason for condemning a whole story."

Address all letters to: The Editor, Bluebook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N.Y.

Has BLUEBOOK reached so low a degree that it has to print second-hand stories? I read "Death Rides the Dondrino"—I don't remember where—perhaps 18 months or two years ago.

I recognized it the moment I read the account of the man drunk on the floor of the stagecoach.

M. P. Parker, *Mexico, D.F.*

*Mr. Richmond's answer: "Like most people, I often read stories that seem familiar, in certain scenes, at least. But calling a story second-hand because one of the characters is drunk in a stagecoach is like making that charge because a character is drunk (or dead) in a saloon, alley, street, ditch or canyon."*

### Good Spot for Stripers

Regarding a recent "Angler's Almanac" by Robert C. McCormick, I was surprised to see so much good dope on West Coast striper fishing and no mention of the Coos River area.

The other day we caught our limit of silvers on Coos Bar, then in about an hour we had five stripers ranging from 24 to 32 pounds. And that's not uncommon in this area.

W. A. Denton, *Coquille, Ore.*

Says Bob McCormick: "Coos Bay area ranks with the best in the West."

### Scuttlebutt

I bought your September issue in Djarkata and

...AND YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM



saw the write-up you gave Victor Johnson in "Editor's Note." Well, if he is a bona fide seaman, he is really pulling your leg. He made 19 mistakes in his story, "A Time for Whiskey."

A partial listing:

1. So the chief engineer looked for the propeller over the stern! By this time the ship should have been 20 feet lower in the water, owing to flooding of engine room and holds.

2. With boilers and generators underwater, where did they get their lights and power?

3. There are no evaporators carried on Liberty ships.

4. Barometer readings of 28.42 are excellent weather indications.

5. On page 236, Merchant Marine Officers' Handbook, there are recipes for cooking rice and peas, not instructions on how to flood a hold.

Sid Levy, *Chief Radio Operator  
S/S Alaskan*

*Author Vic Johnson, who has a chief engineer's license, makes this point-by-point rebuttal:*

1-2. "The shaft sheared off outside of the stern tube, which meant the shaft was still in the tube with packing intact. So there was no flooding of engine room, boilers or generator.

3. "Who said the Bixby was a Liberty? Aside from that, I've sailed three Liberties and all three had evaporators.

4. "A barometer reading of 28.42 was reported by a surviving mate of a T-2 tanker just before she broke in two in an Atlantic blow.

5. "My copy of Merchant Marine Officers' Handbook, published by Cornell Maritime Press, 1944, has 'Engines Broken Down in Heavy Weather' on page 236.

"To sum up, it's not very smart, Mr. Levy, to pick up scuttlebutt and pass it off as fact."

### Dispute Over Car Repairs

Any mechanic who owns more than a screwdriver and a pair of pliers could have set you straight on a number of things in Joe Wherry's article, "Cars: How to Tell What's Wrong" (September).

(1) The transmission cannot get out of line with the motor.

(2) Grease in the transmission will not cause grease seal to be broken because of built-up pressure for the simple reason that it has a pressure valve...

Elmer Betson, *South Bend, Wash.*

*Mr. Wherry, who disputed each of five points raised by Mr. Betson, says this about the two above:*

(1) "Chilton's Auto Repair Manual states: 'When a transmission jumps out of gear when the car is coasting, it almost always indicates misalignment either in the transmission itself or inside the transmission.' I can quote similar statements from six other car manuals.

(2) "Standard domestic transmissions do have a vent. But the vent can become clogged and a build-up of pressure can take place. It happened in a Studebaker I once owned."

# What Strange Powers Did The Ancients Possess?

EVERY important discovery relating to mind power, sound thinking and cause and effect, as applied to self-advancement, was known centuries ago, before the masses could read and write.

Much has been written about the wise men of old. A popular fallacy has it that their secrets of personal power and successful living were lost to the world. Knowledge of nature's laws, accumulated through the ages, is never lost. At times the great truths possessed by the sages were hidden from unscrupulous men in high places, but never destroyed.

## Why Were Their Secrets Closely Guarded?

Only recently, as time is measured; not more than twenty generations ago, less than 1/100th of 1% of the earth's people were thought capable of receiving basic knowledge about the laws of life, for it is an elementary truism that knowledge is power and that power cannot be entrusted to the ignorant and the unworthy.

Wisdom is not readily attainable by the general public; nor recognized when right within reach. The average person absorbs a multitude of details about things, but goes through life without ever knowing where and how to acquire mastery of the fundamentals of the inner mind — that mysterious silent something which "whispers" to you from within.

## Fundamental Laws of Nature

Your habits, accomplishments and weaknesses are the effects of causes. Your thoughts and actions are governed by fundamental laws. Example: The law of compensation is as fundamental as the laws of breathing, eating and sleeping. All fixed laws of nature are as fascinating to study as they are vital to understand for success in life.

You can learn to find and follow every basic law of life. You can begin at any time to discover a whole new world of interesting truths. You can start at once to awaken your inner powers of self-understanding and self-advancement. You can learn from one of the world's oldest institutions, first known in America in 1694. Enjoying the high regard of hundreds of leaders, thinkers and teachers, the order is known as the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Its complete name is the "Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis," abbreviated by the initials "AMORC." The teachings of the Order are not sold, for it is not a commercial organization, nor is it a religious sect. It is a non-profit fraternity, a brotherhood in the true sense.

## Not For General Distribution

Sincere men and women, in search of the truth—those who wish to fit in with the ways of the world—are invited to write for a complimentary copy of the sealed booklet, "The Mastery of Life." It tells how to contact the librarian of the archives of AMORC for this rare knowledge. This booklet is not intended for general distribution, nor is it sent without request. It is therefore suggested that you write for your copy to the Scribe whose address is given in the coupon. The initial step is for you to take.

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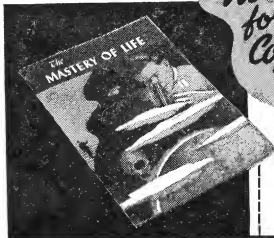
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# Editor's Note:

**This is the time** of year when everybody is supposed to think about the year ahead and decide how he's going to do better. We figure we might as well get into the act, too.

If you've been paying attention, you'll have noticed that while our fiction has kept to the strong, adventure-action kind of story that *BLUEBOOK* has been noted for during its 50 years of life, we've been running a new type of non-fiction since last May. This is in line with our idea to make *BLUEBOOK* a new kind of men's magazine.

The new *BLUEBOOK* is a magazine for men, not boys. We think today's men are grown-ups who are doing a good job of facing a difficult and complex world. We offer them relaxation—because everybody needs respite—in fiction, where it belongs; not in fiction disguised as “true stories.” And in our articles we offer help, information, the low-down on those areas of a man's life where his deepest interests lie—his job, his wife and kids, his home, his sports and hobbies, the way he spends and conserves his family's livelihood.

We won't tell you how to build a coffee table, because others are set up to do that better than we. But we may tell you the best place to find out how to build a coffee table—or if somebody has a bright idea on a new kind of table, we'll report that. Generally, though, we'll try to stick to the broader areas. We may, for instance, report the latest findings on Topic A—*women*—and how you can get along with them better. Or how to save money on the many necessities like home repairs, insurance, loans, or your car. Or how to improve your bowling game—like the one on page 18 by Andy Vari-papa. In all these areas we'll level with you to the best of our ability, and we'll give you only the most authoritative information it's possible for us to get. Editorially, we're not selling anybody's package.

**Take the article** on page 84, for instance. This is as nice, and realistic, a piece on a father's relations with his kids as we've seen in many a month. Contrary to the impression you'd get from most “men's” magazines, quite a few men do have kids and, like Fletcher Slater, author of the article in question, do like them even though frequently baffled by them. Writes Slater about Slater:

*“I'm 50, father of twins, husband of a wife who cooks, sews, has fun, and is good-looking to boot; I'm 6-1, 185, an enthusiastic dub at tennis, volleyball, pingpong, trampoline, photography, wood-working and writing. What I'm really working on is trying to understand myself and, belatedly, my daughters.”*

**From halfway across** the world F. W. Holiday, whose “No Panga for Pieters,” you'll find on page 72, reports the facts of his life somewhat differently. He was born in England, spent War II in the RAF visiting “most parts of Africa, Iraq and similar health resorts.” He quit flying to farm, write fiction, and go fishing. “I do too much fishing—mostly salmon and trout in Welsh streams.”

**Probably the face** shown in the picture here is familiar to most of you by now via the face-owner's TV shows. Currently, coast-to-coast, he's star of NBC-TV's *Tonight*. But we're not concerned with Steve Allen as a showman—much as we admire him in that category. Reason we printed his picture is the story on page 24.

It's Allen's first published short story and, try as we would, when we read it we couldn't avoid some very deep and very trite thoughts along the

Steve  
Allen



general lines of even-though-your-heart-is-breaking-laugh-Clown-laugh. It's a fact, though, that this and all the unpublished Allen short stories we've read are anything but comic; some raise the hairs on your back. All are powerful.

Which probably makes Allen another genius, or something, because in addition to having his own network TV show at the age of 33, he's a pianist of talent, has written a number of songs—one of which sold over 300,000 copies—has written a couple of TV dramas, and has published a book of poems.

But is he *happy*?

Yes.

—A.F.

A BLUEBOOK SERVICE FEATURE

# Collect More on Your Insurance

by EDWIN E. McBRAYER



**Thousands of car-owners aren't collecting money they're entitled to because they don't know all the things their policies cover. How about you?**

**W**HEN YOU BOUGHT that Supermobile Eight you undoubtedly inspected it carefully, asked a lot of questions about it, and test drove it before robbing the piggy bank for the down payment. But if you are like most car-owners you are paying \$100 or more every year for insurance on your car with only the vaguest idea as to what you are buying.

In more than 10 years of handling automobile claims as an adjuster, attorney and claims manager, I've been amazed at the lack of understanding the average car-owner has about his automobile insurance. Insurance companies are presented with thousands of claims each year for which there is no coverage under the policy. On the other hand, thousands of legitimate claims are never presented to the company because the car-owner is unaware he has a claim.

A neighbor of mine took his cocker spaniel for an auto ride before the dog was properly house-broken. The result was some badly-stained upholstery.

"Too bad you folks don't write a policy to cover something like this," he said to me, jokingly.

The truth is that all insurance companies do write a policy that covers accidents of this type. It's called comprehensive, and my friend had it all the time. Probably you have it, too.

Did you know that your auto liability policy covers the cost of bond to release your car from attachment, and also covers the cost of bail bond in event of an accident or traffic-law violation?

Did you know that medical payments coverage on your automobile will pay medical bills incurred by your wife if she is injured while riding the city bus (or in almost any other automobile)?

Did you know that if you buy a second car and have an accident in it within 30 days from the date of purchase, the insurance on your first automobile will automatically apply to your second car provided you immediately notify the company?

Did you know that seat covers (or other ordinary equipment) bought for your car are covered under your auto-theft coverage if they are stolen before you ever put them in the car?

Chances are you have a lot more automobile insurance than you think. What say right now we get out that policy you have stashed away in the

**Never admit an accident  
is your fault and agree to pay the other driver.  
That's for the insurance company to decide.**

dresser drawer and see just what coverage you do have.

The automobile insurance policy is simply a contract between you and the insurance company in which you agree to do certain things and the company agrees to do certain things. The contract is standardized and you will probably find that your policy is exactly like your neighbor's even though you bought them from different companies.

O.K., got your policy before you? Let's look first right at the top of page one and get the name of your company. Put this name and your policy number in your wallet or some place where you can always find it. Just about half of the people involved in accidents don't know the name of their insurance company.

The next item to pay particular attention to is the coverage you have. Somewhere in your policy you will find the various coverages listed: Bodily Injury Liability, Property Damage Liability, Medical Payments, Comprehensive, etc. Opposite each coverage is a space for a premium charge. If a premium charge has been inserted opposite a coverage, you have that coverage. If no premium charge is shown, you don't have.

**LIABILITY.** Bodily Injury Liability and Property Damage Liability protect you from claims by other people for injury or damage arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of your automobile. This coverage does *not* pay you for damage to your car or any other property owned by you or in your care. It does *not* pay you for any injury you may sustain. Neither does it mean that your insurance company will automatically fix anyone's car with which you collide. The coverage is based on legal liability. The insurance company stands in your place insofar as claims are concerned. If you owe for the other fellow's damage, then the insurance company owes it. If you don't owe it, they don't. You have to be at fault before the company owes anything.

Now, under your liability coverages the company is obligated to defend any lawsuit brought against you for damages arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of your automobile, even if the suit is groundless. They will also defend anyone else against such lawsuits if that person was using your car with your permission. The company will pay all the attorneys fees, court costs and ex-

penses of trial. They will pay any judgment obtained against you up to the limits of your policy.

The liability coverage on your Supermobile Eight will also protect you and your wife while driving any other automobile not owned, or regularly used by you or your wife. If you borrow your neighbor's car and have an accident, the policy on your car will protect you against claims by the other party. It does not, however, cover the damage to the car you were driving.

One other thing that the company agrees to do under this coverage: They will pay expenses incurred by you for such immediate medical and surgical relief to others as shall be imperative at the time of the accident. This means that you can agree to pay for *immediate* first aid for anyone injured by your car. But you should not obligate yourself for any treatment beyond that.

Basically then, this is what the insurance company agrees to do under Bodily Injury and Property Damage liability coverage. Now let's see what you have agreed to do under this coverage.

You agree to report all accidents promptly to the company, forward immediately to the company every demand, notice, summons or other process received by you, and cooperate with the company in the investigation of the claim and in the trial of any suit brought against you. Your failure to do any of these things is a violation of your policy and could result in the company denying you protection.

One other word of caution on your liability coverage: The policy excludes liability *assumed* by you under any contract or agreement. When you have an accident, don't tell the other fellow it's your fault and you'll repair his car. Let the insurance investigator determine whether you're in the wrong. That's his job. Unless you're a lawyer, you're probably not familiar with the rules of negligence that apply to the locale of the accident. You may think you're wrong when you're not. Very unlikely, you say? O.K., but it happens all the time.

Only a few weeks ago a Mrs. Adams, insured with my company, was driving down the road when a dog suddenly ran out in the street directly in front of her. Mrs. Adams slammed on the brakes and stopped suddenly in the street without any signal. The driver behind, a Mr. Bates, (those aren't their right names) didn't have time to stop, and smashed into the rear of Mrs. Adams' car. Mrs. Adams



handled the matter correctly by not discussing liability with the other driver, but when she reported the claim to us she confessed that it was all her fault for not giving a signal. After the facts were obtained, we denied Mr. Bates' claim and his insurance company paid for Mrs. Adams' damage, much to her surprise. The driver behind was primarily responsible for the accident. He should have been far enough back and traveling at such a speed that he could stop when some emergency forced the driver ahead to stop suddenly. Let the adjuster worry about who's at fault. That's one of the things you bought with your premium.

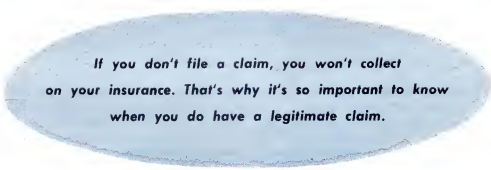
**MEDICAL PAYMENTS.** Now let's check your policy to see if you have a premium charge opposite Medical Payments. If you do, then the company agrees to pay, up to the limit of your coverage, all reasonable expenses incurred within one year from the date of accident for necessary medical, surgical, ambulance, hospital, professional nursing and funeral expenses for each person accidentally injured while in, entering or leaving your car, pro-

vide whether the claim is accepted or not. But if you or anyone else is injured while in contact with your automobile, it should be reported to the company. It might be covered under Medical Payments.

Another point frequently overlooked is that the Medical Payments coverage does not specify that the injury must arise out of the operation of the automobile. So long as you are in the automobile and the injury is accidental you probably have a claim under Medical Payments. If your son is riding in the car with you and cuts his finger while trying out his Boy Scout knife, you should be able to collect the medical expense under your Medical Payments coverage.

The company will expect bills or receipts from you for all the items claimed under Medical Payments coverage. So if you pay any such bills, be sure to get receipts or keep canceled checks.

**COMPREHENSIVE.** Now let's look at the remaining coverages, all of which protect you against damage to *your* automobile. Probably the next



*If you don't file a claim, you won't collect  
on your insurance. That's why it's so important to know  
when you do have a legitimate claim.*

vided the car is being used by you or with your permission. This coverage is not based on liability. No matter who is at fault, everyone in your car is protected including you and members of your family.

This Medical Payments coverage, like your liability coverage, follows you and your wife while in any other car not owned by you. If while riding as a passenger in your neighbor's car you are involved in an accident, the Medical Payments coverage on your car will take care of your medical bills. If your neighbor has medical payments coverage on his car, then your insurance is "excess" coverage, so far as you and your wife are concerned. This means that when your medical bills exceed the limit of your neighbor's policy, then your policy will cover them.

Although the coverage reads, "while in or upon, entering or alighting from" the automobile, claims have been paid in some instances when the injured person was outside the car—fixing a flat tire, working on the motor or the like. Such situations usually involve close questions of coverage and the actual facts of each particular case may de-

termine whether the claim is covered. Comprehensive includes loss by fire, lightning, transportation, theft, windstorm, earthquake, explosion, hail and water. But Comprehensive is more than all these coverages combined. For example, it protects you when a tree limb falls on your parked car, or your car accidentally gets sprayed with paint or a pebble breaks your windshield.

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If you have Comprehensive coverage, you should ask yourself two questions any time your car is damaged: (1) Was the damage accidental? (2) Was it caused by something other than collision or upset? If the answer is yes to both these ques-

tions, you can be pretty sure you have a claim. The only exceptions can be found in your policy under the heading Exclusions. About the only exclusions you are ever likely to be concerned with are these:

—The policy does not cover damage to tires except by fire or theft.

—The policy does not cover damage due to wear and tear, mechanical or electrical breakdown, or freezing.

**COLLISION.** This is probably the next coverage shown on your policy, and is understood better than most coverages by the average car-owner. If you have a premium charge opposite this coverage, the company agrees to pay for loss or damage to your automobile caused by collision or upset. This is generally written with a deductible clause. You pay the first \$25, \$50 or \$100 and the company pays the balance. The amount deductible will appear under Limits of Liability opposite Collision coverage.

Under any of the coverages on your car the company has the option of settling with you for the cost of either repairing your car or "totaling it out." This last means that if the car is damaged to the

point where it is uneconomical to repair, they can pay you what the actual cash value of the car was immediately before the accident. In such a case they will, of course, be entitled to your wrecked car. The term "actual cash value" means the cash price for which a car just like yours can be bought at the time.

If your car is a late model car in good condition, you should insist that repairs be made at a reputable garage that does quality workmanship rather than at some back-alley shop that might repair it more cheaply. Many insurance companies now have adjusters trained to make their own estimates and let you pick the place of repairs. Some companies, however, get a number of estimates and in-

sist on settling for the lowest estimate. If the low estimate is from a reputable garage and includes repair of all your damage, there is no reason why you should not accept it. If you are not familiar with the work done by various garages, you will probably do well to go to the dealer for your make of car.

If yours is a late model car and any of the chrome is bent, you should insist on replacement rather than straightening. When a chrome finished part is straightened, the chrome may peel off after you drive the car awhile.

The insurance company will expect to take depreciation on any item replaced which normally does not last the life of the car—such as tires and convertible tops. It is obvious that if your tires are half worn out, you can't expect new tires in replacement. But you should contest depreciation on any item that normally lasts the life of the car—such as sheet metal and upholstery.

You will find that most adjusters are pretty liberal in settling a loss on their insured's car. If you do feel the adjuster is being unfair in settling with you, discuss it with the agent who sold you the policy. You are his customer, and he will take a personal interest in seeing that you get a square deal.

One other thing about collision coverage: Your premium is based on your paying the deductible amount stated in your policy. Don't deal with a garageman who will "figure in your deductible" in his estimate so that the insurance company will pay the entire bill. Just remember that a fellow who will cheat an insurance company will have no compunction against cheating you too. The \$50 or so you would save might cost you several times that in sloppy repairs.

Most insurance companies expect to pay you everything to which you are entitled under your policy. Disagreements between policyholders and adjusters arise in most instances because of a misunderstanding of the terms of the policy. In this short article only a few high points of the policy could be discussed.

Read your policy. If you don't understand it, ask your agent. Know what you are buying, what you are entitled to. Insist that the company fulfill all the agreements for which you paid your premium.

But remember this, too: The insurance company is just a "pool." You and thousands of other motorists pay your premiums into the pool and when you have a loss it is paid out of the pool. The amount paid out in losses determines how much you have to pay into the pool in premiums. When someone tells you how they cheated the insurance adjuster, don't laugh. It's costing you money!

One other point, the most important of all: When you're out driving your Supermobile Eight, drive carefully. Then probably you'll never need any of this information. —By EDWIN E. McBRAVER

## DO YOU KNOW...

*that your car insurance policy probably covers these situations?*

- Your wife is injured while riding a bus.
- A cat claws and rips your auto upholstery.
- A new spotlight is stolen *before* you put it on the car.
- Your son cuts himself with a knife while in the car.
- You have an accident while driving a neighbor's car.
- A friend gets in a wreck while driving your car.
- You are injured while changing a tire.
- You buy a second car, promptly smash it up before you get it insured.

point where it is uneconomical to repair, they can pay you what the actual cash value of the car was immediately before the accident. In such a case they will, of course, be entitled to your wrecked car. The term "actual cash value" means the cash price for which a car just like yours can be bought at the time.

If your car is a late model car in good condition, you should insist that repairs be made at a reputable garage that does quality workmanship rather than at some back-alley shop that might repair it more cheaply. Many insurance companies now have adjusters trained to make their own estimates and let you pick the place of repairs. Some companies, however, get a number of estimates and in-



# the MAN from CHICAGO

*Charlie figured he could  
spot a pool hustler every time,  
so he knew the mild old man was a phony.*

IT MUST have been at least two years ago that Hustler Curtiss first came into Charlie's poolroom. I can remember pretty exactly, because right from the time he first walked in the front door, with his smooth white hair, his bright-blue plaid shirt, and his straight, stiff way of walking, he was the kind of man you would notice. He nodded politely at Charlie, who was sitting behind the counter reading a comic book, and said, "Good afternoon, sir." It wasn't hard to tell that for a small-town poolroom like ours, this was a pretty unusual guy.

From that time on, he started coming in regular, every day at three o'clock. Other old men came in and hung around because there wasn't any place else for them to go; but you could tell it wasn't that way with Curtiss. He didn't talk and fool around like the others; he always had his eyes right on the tables. But he never seemed interested in playing the game himself.

He didn't hang around the barbershop or the courthouse, either, like all the other footloose old men did; you never saw him, ever, until three o'clock in the afternoon. It seems he had this widowed sister who lived out on Catalpa Street—which is, by the way, about the highest-class district in town—and he stayed with her. She was why he had come to our town in the first place, I guess; after he'd retired. I suppose he would spend the mornings with his sister, talking about books or paintings or something; he seemed like that kind of guy. A different kind of guy; not my kind, but a kind I respect.

For instance, he never did chew tobacco like most of the other old men did; he smoked, cork-tipped cigarettes, and he carried them in a 'thin, silver case in his shirt pocket. It was kind of funny, the way he would pull that elegant-looking case out of an old flannel shirt and then reach into the

pocket of a baggy pair of pants and pull out a little matching lighter and light up. The lighter was different from any I'd ever seen before: it was very small and it always worked.

When I said it was funny, watching him, I didn't mean that it was the kind of a thing you'd laugh at; because Curtiss didn't do things *that* way. There was something different, something natural and smooth about the way he would handle that fancy little lighter. And about the way he dressed, too. He always had on something loose and comfortable looking; but it was never cheap or worn out. I think "casual" is the word you use for it; and that's the way he looked in his clothes. You could tell the stuff he wore was good goods, like the materials you see in the windows of those little, quiet stores in the big towns with a little sign saying "from England," and no price tag.

He never tried to tell anybody anything, either; never seemed to want to do anything but just watch the games and smoke his cigarettes. I hardly spoke 20 words to him in at least two years; but I couldn't help liking him.

Curtiss didn't seem to strike Charlie that way, though. Charlie was the kind of guy who figured that if anybody was much different from himself—and I can't think of any two guys more different than Curtiss and Charlie—there must be something peculiar about the other guy. Charlie always was a great one for kidding people, too; especially people who wouldn't kid him back. That was Charlie's way. In fact, it was Charlie who first gave Curtiss the nickname "Hustler" back when the old man had started coming in the poolroom.

He'd been coming in for maybe a couple of

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Illustrated by TRACY SUGARMAN



weeks and had been doing a lot of smiling but not much talking and some of the boys had noticed he carried a big roll with him. Not that he flashed it on us or anything like that; but most of the boys are pretty observant when it comes to bank-rolls. So anyway, this time, out of a clear blue sky, Charlie comes up to Curtiss and says, "Mind if I ask a question, old-timer?"

Curtiss smiles. "Not at all, young man."

Then Charlie says, "Where did you get that big roll I see you carrying all the time?" Now this kind of shocks me, since a question like that is not considered very good taste around a poolroom.

Curtiss looks at Charlie for a minute. Then he gets a serious look and leans a little forward in his chair. "Well, Charlie, I'll tell you," he says, "I made my bank-roll hustling pool."

Well, naturally, this stops Charlie cold. But only for a minute. Then he starts looking very wise and nodding his head, like he understands.

"Oh," he says, "I see. And where," he says, real polite—and Charlie is never polite without a good reason for it—"did you do this hustling, sir?"

Curtiss looks at Charlie real serious again and he says, "In Chicago, young man. At Wenneker's Billiard Hall. I was houseman there for 40 years."

Well, right off I figure there's no doubt but what the old man is pulling Charlie's leg, and beating him at his own game. But what he says seems to knock Charlie and the rest of them right on out. They must be figuring the old man is expecting them to believe him—and even I have to admit he looks mighty serious about it—and that he's out of his head. You see, everybody's heard of Wenneker's. It must be the biggest and the oldest poolroom in the country. Not that any of us has ever been there; but you can't play pool very long without hearing about Wenneker's. It's the place where the toughest—but the toughest—pool hustlers hang out, and where they say the big horse men and the Syndicate boys come in and drop maybe 50 G's and never bat an eye. And for this quiet old codger in our little poolroom to say he was houseman there—the man who plays anybody who comes in for anything they want to play for—well, I start expecting to see Charlie double up any minute and start pounding on the floor and hollering.

But I got to give Charlie credit; he's still playing it straight. He keeps the innocent look on his face and he says, thoughtful, "Well, now. After 40 years I'd think you'd be mighty tired of pool playing."

At this the old man looks a little sad and wistful. "Son," he says—and I can hear some guy in back gag on that one—"Son, you're absolutely right."

"But then why, sir," says Charlie—and the guy in back is by now having a spasm—"do you spend so much time in here, watching games?"

Now, up to this time, I've figured that the old man has just been kidding Charlie along; but what he says next makes me wonder a little if he hasn't been serious. He says it like he means it; like he means it so much it hurts.

"Well," he says, "the game gets a grip on you—gets in your system. And I'm a little too old to start getting it out." Then he smiles; but his eyes still look kind of wistful.

Charlie puts a real sympathetic look on his face and says, "Gets in your blood, huh?" Then he gives a quick wink to a couple of guys who are standing off to one side, listening, and he says, "Maybe it would do you good if you played a little every now and then. That is, if you could find somebody that wasn't scared to take you on, knowing what a great, all-time hustler you are and all that."

Charlie has begun to quit faking it; and he's got a sneer in his voice that you could tell a mile off. "Maybe you could talk me into playing you, for instance," he says, with the big, dirty grin he's got. "Just a few friendly little games for about 20 bucks apiece."

But Curtiss has still got a faraway look; and he doesn't seem to notice that Charlie has begun talking mean, because he just says, "No, son. Thank you. I'm afraid I'm too old to be much of a player any more. I had to retire quite a few years ago. You see, my heart is not too well."

So Charlie says, "Sure, I know. But come on, Hustler"—and this is the first time Curtiss is called "Hustler"—"you can play me just a few. Why, a few \$20 pool games wouldn't be any strain on an old big-time hustler like you."

"I'm sorry, son. I'd better not."

Suddenly Charlie gets a thoughtful look. "Hustler," he says, "I bet I know what's the matter with your heart."

"Really?" Curtiss says, politely.

"Yes sir, Hustler," Charlie says, "you got the kind of heart trouble that guys who talk big get. The kind that makes you chicken out when a game comes up." Then, suddenly, he steps closer and sticks his face up to Curtiss. He says, slow and soft, "You got a chicken heart, Hustler."

Then I look at Curtiss to see how he's taking it all. Curtiss is just sitting there, like he hasn't heard a thing.

He pulls out his silver case and takes out a cigarette. He gets his lighter out of his pocket and lights up, very calm and unconcerned. Like always, the lighter works on the first try.

Most people think of hustlers as young, skinny men, with pale faces, dark hair, and hawk eyes. At least, that was the idea I had, until this stranger showed up. He was short, thick around the waist, red-faced, middle-aged, and he wore glasses—the steel-rimmed kind. He had on a brown

suit and a darker brown tie, and his shirt was plain white and a little wrinkled around the collar. He looked like a small-time business man—which, after all, you might say he was.

He came in one afternoon about two o'clock and started practicing on the front table, shooting just a fair stick of pool. You know, better-than-average shots; but nothing a player like Charlie couldn't beat. He had a big roll, too, and he flashed it around. Altogether, it was a good come on; and Charlie fell for it, all the way.

He watched the stranger shoot for about 15 minutes. Then he started talking to him, friendly; and in five more minutes the two of them were playing a game, just for fun.

You could tell Charlie was throwing off. He let the man win about four games, and then asked him how about betting a little something on the side. The man said well, yes, but of course he really didn't believe in gambling on pool games, since he thought it could ruin the game, sometimes. Charlie agreed with him, and they started playing for \$2 a game. Then Charlie won a few and he suggested they double the bet so the other man could get even. The other man was doubtful for a minute, but they doubled the bet, and before long the other man was hooked for about \$50 and he started getting mad and saying he'd just come in to practice a little pool, peaceful-like, and here Charlie had come up and hustled him, and he didn't see how it was fair.

So Charlie looked real innocent and said he didn't mean to be hustling anybody, and that he'd just been lucky so far, to be winning like he had, and that he knew how it was, and that he'd be willing to give the other man an even break and would be glad to spot him one ball out of an eight-ball bank game, and that they'd play one for \$50 and that way they'd be sure to break even. So the other guy calmed down a little and said well, okay, and then Charlie racked the balls and they started playing, and you could tell Charlie was a little nervous. Even though as far as he could tell he was a good three balls better than the stranger, that \$50 bet was a good ways out of his \$5-and-\$10 league. Which just goes to show what the idea of easy money'll do; even to a guy as basically small-time as Charlie.

And then, about the middle of the game, Charlie began showing how small-time he really was. He started opening up, shooting his best game and not trying to fool anybody any more. It was almost unethical, the way he did it; just dropping his hustle all of a sudden and playing shutout pool, showing his best stick, shooting his best shots, letting his best game show. It was wrong two ways: First, he should have kept stringing the other man along, since he might have been ready to drop \$300-400; and, second, it was kind of dirty

to kid a fellow along like Charlie had been doing, and then to open up on him like that and make him feel like a sucker.

So Charlie beat the man, but good. For \$50. That put him \$100 ahead; and, if he was cocky before, you could read "strutting high" all over his face now.

And then the stranger made his big play.

He pulled out his billfold, jerked out a wad of bills, peeled a 50 off the top, threw it down on the table, and then started counting 10's and 20's from the rest of the pile, and talking—only it was more like spluttering.

"By golly," he said, counting off his money, "By golly, I'm not a gambling man; but I'll be switched if I know I can't beat your brand of luck pool."

He stacked \$100 in bills together on the table, and then started counting off another \$100. Charlie didn't say anything; you could see he was fascinated. As a matter of fact, we all were. I just happened to notice that it was almost four o'clock, and I looked over towards the wall, and there was Hustler Curtiss, sitting in his usual chair. He was leaning back, watching the money-counting routine like it might have been on television, and he was just kind of smiling. And when he saw me looking at him he did something I had never seen him do before. He winked at me, still smiling. I didn't understand, then, what the smile and the wink meant.

The stranger had finished counting out another \$100 from his roll—and the roll was still pretty big—and he was glaring at Charlie and he said, "By golly, this is two week's commissions and expenses; but I'll lay you the whole \$200, on just one more game, that I can still beat your kind of luck."

It was perfect. Even for Charlie it was too perfect to chicken out on. I think maybe it was the talk about "commissions and expenses" that did it. Everybody knows there's no better sucker than a traveling salesman. Of course, what we didn't know then was that there's maybe 20 fast shooting hustlers on the road that carry sample cases into poolrooms with them—and carry the money out. Only this stranger wasn't that kind—he didn't carry a sample case.

So Charlie bit. "Okay, mister," he said, "You've got you a game." Then he racked the balls.

Racking, you could see his hand was shaking, just a little. Even playing a game he thought was a mortal lock—a lead-pipe cinch—you could see the chicken in him.

The stranger won. Not by a lot—he beat Charlie eight balls to six—and not by looking good either. His game didn't seem to improve any; but, somehow, Charlie didn't get any of the easy shots and somehow the other man did. You couldn't say



the stranger was playing safe—at least you couldn't see it—but Charlie was always stepping up to a hard shot, and the stranger seemed to get an awful lot of the easy kind.

When Charlie lost he looked like he couldn't believe it. He didn't say anything at all, just walked up to the cash register on the counter, rang up a No Sale, and started pulling bills out of the cash drawer. He must have had a good deal on hand; because he was able to get out the \$100 he needed without having to go to the safe. Then he fished the \$100 he had won out of his pocket, came back over to the table, and started counting out the bills. He stacked them neatly together, and handed them to the other man.

Then Charlie happens to look up and he sees Curtiss sitting there, still smiling, minding his own business. Charlie looks at him a minute, real hard, and you can see he's getting mad at that smile: and

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## make it easy

PERHAPS some cold evening this winter when you come out to your car the lock will be frozen, and you will be unable to push the key into the lock. Retrace your steps and get an ordinary soda straw and use it to blow into the door lock. Your warm breath will melt the ice in seconds and the door can then be opened.

—Jack White, Amarillo, Texas.

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if you know Charlie you know that about this time is when he's going to start looking for someone to take his losing out on, and especially somebody who won't fight him back.

So suddenly he says to Curtiss, very mean, "What are you grinning at?"

Curtiss looks surprised. You can see he's been sort of wrapped up in his thoughts, and that Charlie has jolted him out of them. "Sir?" he says, surprised.

"Sir, my butt!" Charlie says, "I said, what do you think you're grinning at?"

"Oh," Curtiss says, "I was just thinking. Thinking about some . . . games that I had seen before, somewhat like the one you've been playing." He smiles at Charlie, like he might be smiling at some little boy. "Only, of course," he says, "that was a long time ago."

"In Chicago?" You can tell by looking that Charlie is about ready to blow his top.

But Curtiss isn't noticing. He has sort of a faraway look, and he says, "That's right. At Wenneker's."

This does it. Charlie's top blows. He grabs his cue stick and slams the butt of it down on the floor, hard.

"Good old Wenneker's in Chicago!" he says, spitting out the words. "Good old Chicago where you used to hustle." He looks at Curtiss real hard, and says, slow and loud, "You give me a pain."

Curtiss raises his eyebrows, just a little. "A pain?" he says.

"That's right. You crummy old phony. You couldn't hustle my grandmother, and you know it." He spits on the floor. "Chicago!" he says, like it's a dirty word.

FOR at least a minute nobody says a thing. The stranger's been quiet, naturally; and I feel as if I should say something, but I don't know exactly what; and I'm standing there thinking of ways to tell Charlie off, when somebody speaks up from the crowd that has been gathered around the table and says to Charlie, "Lay off the old guy, will you? He never bothered you none." And Charlie turns around to say something back when, suddenly, Curtiss speaks up.

"Charlie," he says, "you don't believe that I know anything at all about pool playing, do you?"

Charlie looks at him. Then he spits again. "Hell no!" he says.

"I see," says Curtiss. "I really suspected as much." Then he looks at the stranger. "And you, sir, how about you? Would you say I was a good pool player?"

The stranger looks annoyed. "How should I know?" he says. "You might be Willie Mosconi, for all I know."

All of a sudden Curtiss' smile turns into a grin, and he chuckles, real soft. Then he says, "Well, gentlemen, this is a new one. Here I am trying to tell you that I'm a pool hustler, and you won't believe me. And this gentleman here"—he waves his hand towards the stranger—"has been trying very hard—and, evidently, succeeding—to show you that he isn't a hustler." He gazes at us all, very confidentially, looking like a king sitting up on his throne. "Now that is an odd one, isn't it?"

"Wait a minute," says the stranger. "Who says I'm trying to hustle anybody?"

"Why I just did, young man," Curtiss says. "Aren't you?"

The stranger starts getting a mean look on his face and he says, "Now hold on a minute, old-timer . . ."

"Don't get angry, young man," Curtiss interrupts. "You won't lose your chance of winning yourself some money." He leans back in his chair, and pulls his silver cigarette case out of his pocket. He takes a cigarette out of it and holds it, for a

minute, between his fingers. Then he says, "I'll be glad to play you."

The stranger says, "What?"

"I said I'll play you," he says, and he leans forward again, fishing in his pocket for the little lighter. "Although my doctor wouldn't approve—not at all—and although I can't guarantee that you'll beat me; I'll tell you that I have a lot more money than Charlie has; and I'll play you longer before I quit."

Charlie is still staring. "Well, I'll be damned!" he says. Then he laughs. "Well, I'll be damned!" he says again.

Only this time he doesn't seem quite so sure of himself.

The stranger has had a mean look on his face; but now he starts looking sort of puzzled too and he says, "Now, listen, old-timer, I was doing all right here before you started butting in."

Curtiss just smiles and reaches for his billfold.

His billfold is one of the kind that opens from the side and is long—so as not to bend the money I guess—and he opens it and pulls out a very neat looking stack of bills and then he holds the stack in one hand and flips through it at the corner with the thumb of the other hand, real graceful, and he more or less answers the stranger's objections that way, since as far as I can see every one of the bills has the number "50" neatly printed on the corner, and there are a very great many of the bills. Then, to clinch his argument, he says, "How much would you like to play for?"

So Charlie looks at Charlie, who he must have known was about ready to quit anyway, and he looks at Curtiss, who looks very old and feeble, as well as very rich, and it doesn't take him long to make up his mind.

"Let's start it with 50, old-timer," he says; and you can hear respect in his voice for the first time.

**B**UT all of a sudden Charlie begins to look indignant or, more truthfully, he *continues* to look that way—and he says, "Hey! What about my 100 bucks, mister? I got a right to win it back." This is amusing on Charlie's part; because we all know that Charlie probably was getting ready to quit anyway when Curtiss got into it.

But Curtiss smiles at him and says, "All right, Charlie, I'll give you a chance to get your money back—probably a much better chance than you would have had playing this fellow yourself."

"Now wait a minute," Charlie says, "I was beating this guy. So he won one game, so what? I was a cinch to do all right with him."

But Curtiss just says, "You were out of your class. All of the way out of your class. You're lucky I stopped you." Then he pauses for a minute; and when nobody says anything he goes on and says, "Very well, then. Here's my proposition: I'll bet you right now \$100 that I win this first game."



Charlie just stands where he is, looking at the old man, and he doesn't seem to catch on. He doesn't say anything; just looks.

Then Curtiss says, "How can you lose?" His face is deadpan; but I can see kind of a twinkle in his eyes. "Certainly this man is a better player than your . . . ah . . . grandmother?"

Then Charlie seems to come out of his daze and he says, "Hell no." Real loud.

Curtiss says, "He isn't?" He raises his eyebrows. Somebody in back laughs. Charlie looks pretty stupid, and I have a hard time keeping a straight face, myself.

"NO!" Charlie says, "I mean, no I won't bet." He seems suddenly to try to look sly—like he is seeing things going on that nobody else sees. "How do I know I'm not pushing a rigged game. I don't like it."

It's really pretty plain what Charlie is beefing about. Here he's got what looks like a big, beautiful bet being offered to him, the kind of a bet no self-respecting gambler should ever turn down; and he hasn't got the nerve to cover it.

But Curtiss just keeps smiling and says, "All right, Charlie, have it your way."

Then he gets down out of the high chair—you could almost call it a throne—and goes over to the rack, and studies the cues. Then he picks him one, and starts chalking up. It almost makes me feel sick, watching him. He moves so slow and careful; you can almost hear his joints creaking; and I don't see how he's going to make it when the time comes for him to bend down over the table.

So they play: eight-and-out bank pool for \$50 a game. The stranger breaks the balls, banks one, and misses. He has left Curtiss a so-so kind of shot—not too hard; but not so easy, either. In a \$50 game, that's a hard kind of a shot to deal with.

It doesn't take Curtiss long to figure it out; but the way he bends over the table to get into position, we think it's going to take him forever. But he gets there, way up over the table, and he calls his shot, "Cross the corner, young man," real pleasant, pumps his cue stick once, and then pokes into the cue ball. The ball goes: cross corner.

At this point, I feel like applauding. But if I am expecting any miracles I am soon to be disappointed. Curtiss misses the next one. So the game goes on; but it's a quick game; because both of these boys, it seems, know what's what with a pool table; and when it's over the stranger has won. But it's a close score; eight to six.

Then they play another, and Curtiss loses it, too. This time the score is eight to five. This game he's better, not so stiff and a little smoother; but the stranger is beginning to show his stuff, and it looks like he's got plenty. I guess the first game's score has worried him some; and, besides, Curtiss has said he knows the guy's a hustler anyway, so the guy has let himself improve a little. Now the thing that I'm wondering is: Just how good is this guy's best game? Has he let it all come out yet; or is he still holding back?

Next game I find out. He blasts Curtiss. The poor old guy tries to put up a fight; but the stranger cuts him down before he gets a chance: eight to one. And the shooting the stranger is doing; nobody has ever played like that in this poolroom before.

I steal a look at Charlie's face. He looks thoughtful; I'm betting he's thinking right now about what would have happened to him if Curtiss hadn't stopped him from playing this guy.

Curtiss is paying off his third \$50 after this last game when he looks at the stranger, smiling, and he says, "How would you like to play a game of straight pool, young man. One hundred and twenty-five points?"

"What's wrong with what we're playing?" He stuffs the 50 in his pocket.

"Nothing," Curtiss says. "But it seems as if I'm getting tired more quickly than I thought. And, since I promised you a chance to win a good deal of money, I thought you might like trying 125 points for . . . well, say, \$500?"

The stranger stares a second, then, suddenly, he grins. "You know what, old-timer?" he says, "To tell the truth I was getting tired of playing bank." He starts pulling money out of his pockets. Then he says to Charlie, "Rack the balls for straight pool."

Charlie comes over and racks the balls. The stranger breaks, and they start playing.

I saw Willie Mosconi shoot pool once, back when I was wearing a khaki suit and he was giving exhibitions in Army camps. He was World's Champion then, at 14 and 1, straight pool. Mosconi

didn't shoot pool like anyone else I had ever seen.

I never saw playing like that again, until I saw Curtiss play that one game of straight pool, there at Charlie's pool hall. He was different from Mosconi because he was stiff and slow; but he had the same way of fitting in with the game, the same class of playing, the same deadly accuracy. And his eyes—I had never noticed anything peculiar about his eyes before, but now, with his stick in his hand, shooting, then chalking, then shooting again, his eyes were moving over the table, looking from ball to ball, expertly, seeming to glitter—little, black, bright eyes, glancing back and forth, looking for shots, never blinking. Then his eyes would find what they wanted, and he would bend down to the shot, stiff but no longer awkward, easy and smooth, and let fly. His speed was always the same, like Mosconi's, medium-hard, and the balls would roll with a kind of sureness that they never had before. It was beautiful to watch. You couldn't hear a sound in the room, except for the noise the balls made when Curtiss shot them into the pockets.

THE game was over very quickly. For what seemed like a long while, nobody said a word. I looked at Charlie. He was still sitting just like he had been when they started playing. His lower lip was hanging a little lower than usual. He was staring at Curtiss.

Then the stranger walked over to the rack and put away his cue. When he walked back he had his billfold out. He stopped, looked at Curtiss, and said, "Well, I'll be damned." He said one word at a time, slowly, and in a low voice. Then he started pulling money out of his billfold, quietly. He didn't go through any routine, this time, of counting it out on the table.

Curtiss smiled. Then he handed his stick to Charlie, sitting behind him. "Please put it up for me, Charlie," he said. "I'm beginning to feel a little tired."

Charlie took the stick and put it in the rack.

The stranger was still looking at Curtiss. Then he said, "What's your name, mister?" and his voice sounded almost scared.

"Curtiss." He was still smiling. "Billy Curtiss."

The stranger kept staring for a minute. Then his jaw fell down. "Billy Curtiss," he said—it was like a minister saying the name of the Lord—"You mean you're Billy Curtiss?"

"That's right," Curtiss said.

"From Chicago?"

Suddenly, Curtiss' smile changed to a grin. He nodded his head towards Charlie. "Ask him," he said.

The stranger looked at Charlie. Charlie looked at the stranger; then he looked at Hustler Curtiss.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said.

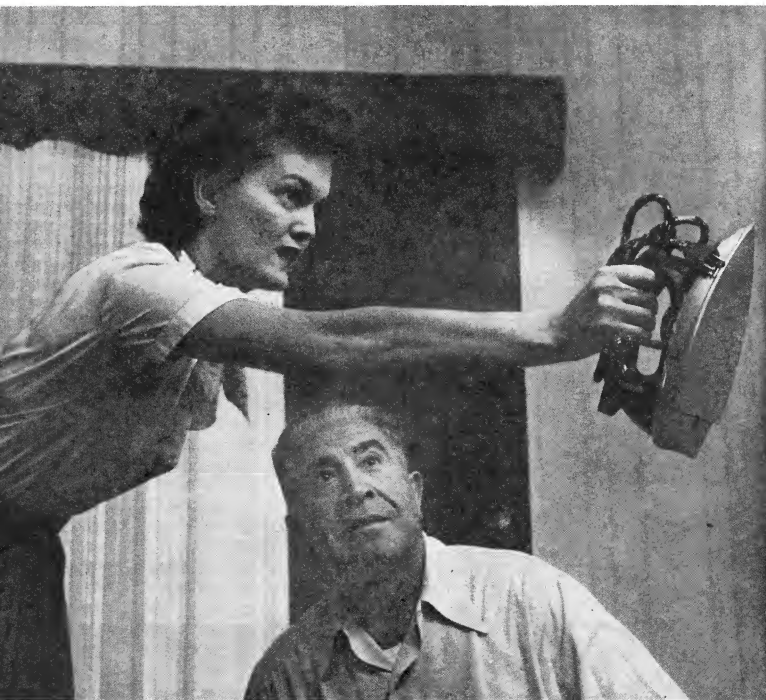
—BY WALTER S. TEVIS, JR.

# ***Raise Your Average***

BY ANDY VARIPAPA

*Former National Match Game Champion*

PHOTOS BY HOMER PAGE



Iron out kinks in your stride and swing by practicing at home—with a flatiron, if you don't have a ball.

# 20 Pins

WITH PAUL GARDNER

*Are you rolling the ball too fast?*

*Taking too few steps? Hopping on the approach? An all-time great of the game offers some tested tips that always work.*

ONE AFTERNOON while teaching a group of bowlers, I noticed a buxom young woman in an adjacent alley. Obviously a beginner, she was rolling the ball first with her right hand and then with her left. When she continued this through several frames, my curiosity got the better of me. I went over to her.

"Please excuse me, Miss," I began, "but if you really want to learn how to bowl, you should make up your mind whether you want to bowl left- or right-handed."

"Who wants to learn how to bowl?" she said. "I want to reduce—take a little off this side, and a little off that side."

Maybe she had something there. Still, most of America's 20 million bowlers view the game as considerably more than a reducing exercise. And they want to bowl to the best of their ability.

Unhappily, all too many fail to learn the fundamentals properly, and therefore can't become the bowlers they're capable of being. I believe I can point out some basic facts of bowling life that will enable a bowler to better his average about 20 pins.

Remember, at the outset, that it's never too late to improve your game. Age makes no difference. I was 56 when I defeated Joe Wilman to win the National Match Game championship for the second straight year.

Even physical limitations needn't hold you back. I've bowled 75 perfect games and now probably earn more money than anybody in the sport, and I'm no perfect specimen. One of my legs is shorter than the other because of fractures sustained in my youth, and two of the knuckles on my right



hand are badly out of whack as a result of baseball injuries.

Well, let's go into bowling particulars. Don't be too concerned at the start with the size of your pinfall. Until you straighten out your style, an occasional big score will only be misleading. Learn how to control that ball and you'll notice, quickly enough, a substantial rise in your average.

How do you achieve control? First step is to use the right kind of ball.

Choose one that's easy to handle. I advocate the three-fingered ball rather than the two-fingered. Don't think you should take the heaviest ball, the 16-pounder. After all, everyone is built differently. I use the heavy ball but I weigh 185 pounds and, though over 60, am as strong as most young men.

To get the ball properly fitted, visit a local bowling supply house where they have devices to measure your hand. The fit should be comfortable, neither too loose nor too tight.

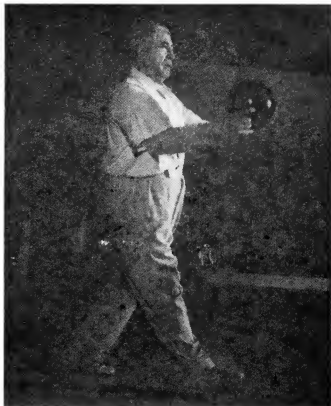
Bowling shoes also should be carefully fitted, since footwork is as important to a bowler as it is to Fred Astaire.

As you know, one of your bowling shoes is called the slide shoe—you slide on it as you let go of the ball. Proper sliding is a vital aspect of bowling. It must fit in with the general pattern of your rhythm or you won't help your game. You'll hurt it—and, possibly, yourself. I remember what hap-

## FOUR-STEP DELIVERY



**STANCE:** About 16 feet from foul line, Andy lines up left foot with headpin.



**FIRST STEP:** Body erect, he raises ball chest high to give momentum to swing.

pened to Fred Woll, who was a member of the championship Strohs of Detroit.

I watched Fred and then warned him that he was straining himself too much on his approach and would eventually suffer for it. There was nothing remarkable about this observation; it was obvious to anybody who had been around bowling for any length of time.

Fred would come to an abrupt stop on his left foot as he reached the foul line.

Since he didn't slide, his momentum would hurl him off stride and he would execute a little hop at the conclusion of his approach. He finally developed a serious back condition. He visited many specialists—in fact, he collected 18 kinds of back harness before he was through. Fortunately, he recovered. Today, he has mastered a slow, easy walk-up with a little slide at the end.

What's the correct way to slide? The toe of the left shoe must hit the floor first. (That is, if you're right-handed; if you're a southpaw, switch all my directions accordingly.) As you slide, the heel comes down, serving as a brake. The object of the slide is to enable the bowler to keep his balance and retain full control of the ball as he releases it, and then come to a gradual stop. As in the case of Wolf, too abrupt a halt causes strain to the back and leg muscles.

The slide, of course, comes at the end of your

approach. You can approach with three, four or five steps. I recommend the four-step delivery for most bowlers. Let's run through it for proper technique.

Standing back 15 or 16 feet from the foul line, place your left foot in line with the headpin. Raise the ball chest high, with arms held close to the sides and resting against the body.

If the ball is held low before the beginning of the delivery, then the arc of the swing is automatically cut down and the speed of the ball is checked. If you hold the ball away from the body, an undue tension is placed upon the arm, and the free swinging motion is impeded as the first step is taken.

You should stand erect, too, because crouching or bending over tends to shift the weight of the ball to the hands and forearms, producing strain. Properly executed, bowling is just as simple and effortless as walking.

Once you are set with your stance and have raised the ball chest high, you start to walk with your right foot. You keep going in a fast walk, releasing the ball as you slide and as you conclude your swing. Your right foot goes back as your right hand goes forward when you release the ball.

Ninety-nine percent of the star bowlers of the U. S.—and I know most of them—use at least a four-step delivery. With a three-step, you can't generate enough momentum to develop a smooth delivery,





**THIRD STEP:** At top of backswing, arm is horizontal, body nicely in balance.



**FOURTH STEP:** Slide begins well back from foul line where ball is released.

the fundamental for good bowling. True, there are some unusually powerful men who don't require average momentum, but they're the exceptions—and for my money there's a hitch in their styles.

After you gain poise and control, the five-step delivery is even better than the four-step. In the five-step, of course, you start the approach with your left foot.

In perfecting your ball-handling and approach, you can practice at home as well as at the alley. I, myself, after all these years and in addition to all my exhibitions, practice my steps and my swing in the parlor—without releasing the ball, of course. This kind of practice is often more important than league play, especially if you've sloughed off into bad bowling habits.

If you don't have a ball at home, you can use a flatiron to help you smooth out your swing and delivery. This may sound a bit awkward, but if a man knows what he's trying to achieve, he doesn't always need orthodox methods. Don't, however, be like the woman I know who let the flatiron slip out of her hand. It went through the wall. And I know one bowler who literally knocked himself out when he struck himself on the chin with a follow-through.

Now, let's assume that with all this sharpening up on fundamentals, you've learned to reach the

foul line correctly. What about the kind of ball you throw? If you want to improve that average substantially, you must master the hook shot.

You throw the hook with a counter-clockwise motion of the wrist, hand and fingers. As the ball comes through in the downswing of the delivery, thumb and index finger are pointed downward to form an inverted V. When the ball is released, the thumb comes out first, then the finger or fingers (depending on whether you're using a two- or three-fingered ball). As the fingers emerge, they come up, applying a spin to the ball. This causes the ball to hook sharply toward the one-three pocket as it nears the set-up of pins. The release of the ball coincides with the conclusion of the slide to the foul line.

When you hook properly, the ball really works for you. It mixes or spins the pins as it bangs into them and then the pins politely co-operate by toppling other pins. A hook ball, whizzing in from the right side of the lane, snacks into the one, three, five and nine pins and they carry on into the other pins. You'll run into splits, of course, but fewer than you would without a good hook.

Naturally, in throwing the hook, you direct the ball towards the right side of the alley to compensate for the spin. Generally speaking, you should place the ball anywhere from eight to 12 boards from the right-hand side of the lane, de-



**FIVE MINUTES** a day, practice your hook by throwing the ball on a bed, as Andy demonstrates. It will do wonders for your game.

pending upon the degree of your hook. Most bowlers go for the three pin, but many cast the ball in the general direction of the six. You must figure out your own problem. In any event, get the ball well out into the lane so that it won't be affected by the rougher surface of the approach. Don't "throw" the ball, but see that it lands on the polished surface of the lane beyond the foul line.

You can practice your hook at home by throwing the ball on the bed. This is fine exercise for the fingers and hand. You simply stand three to six feet from a bed or couch and toss the ball, getting the thumb out first so that the fingers revolve the ball. Doing this exercise even for five minutes a day will eventually make the handling of the ball almost like second nature to you. I hardly need warn you not to miss the bed.

Some top-flight bowlers prefer a curve to a hook, but there's not too much difference between the shots, save in degree. The curve passes over more of the lane's width and doesn't break so sharply. It's often favored on "fast" or highly-polished alleys. You throw it with a decided lift at the point of release, more so than with the hook, and you use less speed. In addition, the curve is

thrown from a place farther to the left of the lane to allow for the exaggerated curving of the ball.

Most beginners and low-average bowlers favor the straight ball. This ball is released with the thumb pointing toward the pins and the fingers held directly under the ball. It's delivered without any spin or turning action. If you're in the novice category, knowledge of the straight ball serves a distinct purpose if it encourages you to work on such fundamentals as the approach, the backswing, the downswing and the follow-through. Practice with the straight ball to get a better feel of the ball, but graduate to the hook if you want those extra pins.

Many faults creep into one's bowling and they should be rooted out immediately. A "back-up" ball, or fade, will cut down your average considerably. A "back-up" starts as a straight ball, but lades in a slight curve to the right as it nears the pins. The cause is a faulty delivery or a weak wrist, and the ball spins in a clockwise, rather than counter-clockwise, motion at the instant of release. This ball produces few strikes and a discouraging number of poor leaves. One way to check the "back-up" tendency is to see that the thumb is withdrawn before the lift action begins.

It might be a good idea for you to check on some of the other things you may be doing wrong. Perhaps you're placing too much reliance on a speed ball.

In my book, the speed ball has far too much against it for good bowling. It often leads to an off-balance delivery; strained arms, wrists, hands or fingers; a jerky approach; and lack of accuracy. Any of these developments should be enough to indict it. In addition, the speed ball doesn't mix with the pins like the slower, busier hook.

Many a smash into the one-three pocket with a speed ball fails to produce a strike because the ball drives between other pins the first pins that it hits, leaving two groups still erect. But the hook mixes the first pins horizontally so that they sweep down other pins by contacting some with their tops and some with their bottoms.

It may be argued by some bowlers that a fast ball is natural to them and there's nothing they can do about it. They can do something, though. They can ask themselves the following questions: Am I allowing too much distance for the run to the foul line? Am I starting too swiftly from my starting position? Am I accelerating my steps too quickly? Is my backswing too high? Do I stop too suddenly, at the foul line? Am I speeding up on the downswing and delivery? Am I throwing the ball instead of rolling it?

What you must do, if speed is cutting down on your potential, is slow down to a medium-speed ball that works with the pins. Instead of a 14- to 16-foot approach, cut down to 12 feet. On the approach itself shorten that first stride and so adjust your ensuing strides that you will not go over the foul line. This adjustment requires considerable practice, but it will develop the newer, smoother

**WHICH BALL IS A STRIKE?** Top picture shows split in making; middle is spare; bottom, strike. Notice how hooked strike ball mixes first pins horizontally so they'll sweep down other pins. White circles indicate where pins were before hit.

style you need to overcome the speed-ball habit. Later, when your style has been rectified, you may return to a start back of the 12-foot mark.

Of course, some bowlers roll too slow a ball. To overcome this fault, you reverse the procedure for slowing the speed ball. Speed up your steps a bit, take a higher backswing, bring the ball through more rapidly in the downswing and at the point of release. If you can add an extra step to the approach, that may help, too.

It is an absolute fact that the conditions of the lanes will often throw off the best of bowlers. Experience alone will help you analyze alleys. Because of atmospheric conditions or the varying care given to the alleys and pins, different problems constantly arise. I should know because, with all my exhibitions and continual travel from one end of the country to the other, I have probably bowled on more alleys than any man who ever lived.

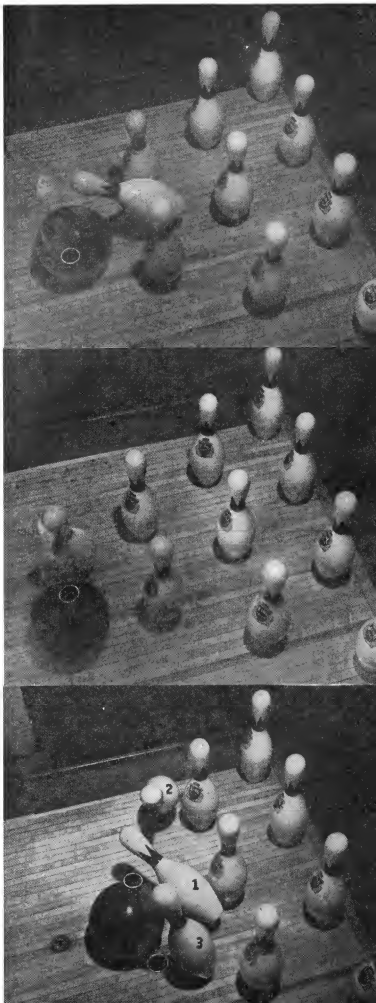
When I throw a ball on a strange alley, I never take my eye off the ball until it strikes the pins. I watch the action of the ball with the pins, even on strikes. I study the course of the ball as it traverses the lane to see if it hits some spots which affect the roll. If the ball does not finish according to my expectations, I try to do something about it. The situation may call for more speed, less speed, different angles, more hook. You must be able to adapt.

Incidentally, whether it's better to be a headpin bowler or a spot bowler is a matter open to discussion. The headpin bowler sights a mental line from the one-three pocket back to the foul line from where he intends to start his ball. The spot bowler—and he should own a sufficiently grooved delivery to attempt this style—picks a spot at the foul line and another down the lane where he wants the ball to roll. He does not actually have to look at the pins.

Whatever tactics you adopt, you'll only do well if you have the proper weapons at your disposal. I cannot repeat too much that good fundamentals are as essential in bowling as in golf. In both sports, a teacher is of infinite help. If you have no expert or able friend to assist you, a run-down of the principles I've discussed here should prove invaluable. But the right kind of practice must go along with it.

Just keep at it and don't get discouraged. I bowl left-handed almost as well as right, and I suppose I could support a 200 average as a southpaw if I had to. Yet, I never learned how to bowl-left-handed until I was past 35. Let that be a lesson to anybody in the bowling doldrums.

—BY ANDY VARIPAPA



# the PUBLIC HATING

BY STEVE ALLEN

*In his first published short story, this noted TV comic tells a strong and bitter tale which may be prophetic.*

THE WEATHER was a little cloudy on that September 9, 1978, and here and there in the crowds that surged up the ramps into the stadium people were looking at the sky and then at their neighbors and squinting and saying, "Hope she doesn't rain."

On television the weatherman had forecast slight cloudiness but no showers. It was not cold. All over the neighborhood surrounding the stadium, people poured out of street-cars and busses and subways. In ant-like lines they crawled across streets, through turnstiles, up stairways, along ramps, through gates, down aisles.

Laughing and shoving restlessly, damp-palmed with excitement, they came shuffling into the great concrete bowl, some stopping to go to the rest-rooms, some buying popcorn, some taking free pamphlets from the uniformed attendants.

Everything was free this particular day. No tickets had been sold for the event. The public proclamations had simply been made in the newspapers and on TV and over 65,000 people had responded.

For weeks, of course, the papers had been suggesting that the event would take place. All during the trial, even as early as the selection of the jury, the columnists had slyly hinted at the inevitability of the outcome. But it had only been official since yesterday. The television networks had actually gotten a slight jump on the papers. At six o'clock the government had taken over all network facilities for a brief five-minute period during which the announcement was made.

"We have all followed with great interest," the Premier had said, looking calm and handsome in a gray double-breasted suit, "the course of the trial of Professor Ketteridge. Early this afternoon the jury returned a verdict of guilty. This verdict having been confirmed within the hour by the Supreme Court, in the interests of time-saving,

the White House has decided to make the usual prompt official announcement. There will be a public hating tomorrow. The time: 2:30 P.M. The place: Yankee Stadium in New York City. Your assistance is earnestly requested. Those of you in the New York area will find . . . ."

The voice had gone on, filling in other details, and in the morning, the early editions of the newspapers included pictures captioned, "Bronx couple first in line," and "Students wait all night to view hating" and "Early birds."

By one-thirty in the afternoon there was not an empty seat in the stadium and people were beginning to fill up a few of the aisles. Special police began to block off the exits and word was sent down to the street that no more people could be admitted. Hawkers slipped through the crowd selling cold beer and hot-dogs.

Sitting just back of what would have been first base had the Yankees not been playing in Cleveland, Frederic Traub stared curiously at the platform in the middle of the field. It was about twice the size of a prize-fighting ring. In the middle of it there was a small raised section on which was placed a plain wooden kitchen chair.

To the left of the chair there were seating accommodations for a small group of dignitaries. Downstage, so to speak, there was a speaker's lectern and a battery of microphones. The platform was hupg with bunting and pennants.

The crowd was beginning to hum ominously.

At two minutes after two o'clock a small group of men filed out onto the field from a point just back of home plate. The crowd buzzed more loudly for a moment and then burst into applause. The men carefully climbed a few wooden steps,

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Illustrated by JOHN McDERMOTT





walked in single file across the platform, and seated themselves in the chairs set out for them. Traub turned around and was interested to observe high in the press box, the winking red lights of television cameras.

"Remarkable," said Traub softly to his companion.

"I suppose," said the man. "But effective."

"I guess that's right," said Traub. "Still, it all seems a little strange to me. We do things rather differently."

"That's what makes horse-racing," said his companion.

TRAUB listened for a moment to the voices around him. Surprisingly, no one seemed to be discussing the business at hand. Baseball, movies, the weather, gossip, personal small-talk, a thousand-and-one subjects were introduced. It was almost as if they were trying not to mention the hating.

His friend's voice broke in on Traub's reverie.

"Think you'll be okay when we get down to business? I've seen 'em keel over."

"I'll be all right," said Traub. Then he shook his head. "But I still can't believe it."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know, the whole thing. How it started. How you found you could do it."

"Beats the hell out of me," said the other man.

"I think it was that guy at Duke University first came up with the idea. The mind over matter thing has been around for a long time, of course. But this guy, he was the first one to prove scientifically that mind can control matter."

"Did it with dice, I believe," Traub said.

"Yeah, that's it. First he found some guys who could drop a dozen or so dice down a chute of some kind and actually control the direction they'd take. Then they discovered the secret—it was simple. The guys who could control the dice were simply the guys who *thought* they could."

"Then one time they got the idea of taking the dice into an auditorium and having about 2,000 people concentrate on forcing the dice one way or the other. That did it. It was the most natural thing in the world when you think of it. If one horse can pull a heavy load so far and so fast it figures that 10 horses can pull it a lot farther and a lot faster. They had those dice fallin' where they wanted 'em 80 percent of the time."

"When did they first substitute a living organism for the dice?" Traub asked.

"Damned if I know," said the man. "It was quite a few years ago and at first the government sort of clamped down on the thing. There was a little last-ditch fight from the churches, I think. But they finally realized you couldn't stop it."

"Is this an unusually large crowd?"

"Not for a political prisoner. You take a rapist or a murderer now, some of them don't

pull more than maybe twenty, thirty thousand. The people just don't get stirred up enough."

The sun had come out from behind a cloud now and Traub watched silently as large map-shaped shadows moved majestically across the grass.

"She's warming up," someone said.

"That's right," a voice agreed. "Gonna be real nice."

Traub leaned forward and lowered his head as he retied the laces on his right shoe and in the next instant he was shocked to attention by a guttural roar from the crowd that vibrated the floor.

In distant right center-field, three men were walking toward the platform. Two were walking together, the third was slouched in front of them, head down, his gait unsteady.

Traub had thought he was going to be all right but now, looking at the tired figure being prodded toward second base, looking at the bare, bald head, he began to feel slightly sick.

It seemed to take forever before the two guards jostled the prisoner up the stairs and toward the small kitchen chair.

When he reached it and seated himself the crowd roared again. A tall, distinguished man stepped to the speaker's lectern and cleared his throat, raising his right hand in an appeal for quiet. "All right," he said, "all right."

The mob slowly fell silent. Traub clasped his hands tightly together. He felt a little ashamed.

"All right," said the speaker. "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the President of the United States I welcome you to another Public Hating. This particular affair," he said, "as you know is directed against the man who was yesterday judged guilty in United States District Court here in New York City—Professor Arthur Ketteridge."

At the mention of Ketteridge's name the crowd made a noise like an earthquake-rumble. Several pop-bottles were thrown, futilely, from the center-field bleachers.

"We will begin in just a moment," said the speaker, "but first I should like to introduce the Reverend Charles Fuller, of the Park Avenue Reborn Church, who will make the invocation."

A small man with glasses stepped forward, replaced the first speaker at the microphone, closed his eyes, and threw back his head.

"Our Heavenly Father," he said, "to whom we are indebted for all the blessings of this life, grant, we beseech Thee, that we act today in justice and in the spirit of truth. Grant, O Lord, we pray Thee, that what we are about to do here today will render us the humble servants of Thy divine will. For it is written the *wages of sin is death*. Search deep into this man's heart for the seed of repentance if there be such, and if there be not, plant it therein, O Lord, in Thy goodness and mercy."



There was a slight pause. The Reverend Fuller coughed and then said, "Amen."

The crowd, which had stood quietly during the prayer, now sat down and began to buzz again.

The first speaker rose. "All right," he said. "You know we all have a job to do. And you know why we have to do it."

"Yes!" screamed thousands of voices.

"Then let us get to the business at hand. At this time I would like to introduce to you a very great American who, to use the old phrase, needs no introduction. Former president of Harvard University, current adviser to the Secretary of State, ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Howard S. Weltmer!"

A wave of applause vibrated the air.

DR. WELTMER stepped forward, shook hands with the speaker, and adjusted the microphone.

"Thank you," he said. "Now, we won't waste any more time here since what we are about to do will take every bit of our energy and concentration if it is to be successfully accomplished. I ask you all," he said, "to direct your unwavering attention toward the man seated in the chair to my left here, a man who in my opinion is the most despicable criminal of our time—Professor Arthur Ketteridge!"

The mob shrieked.

"I ask you," said Weltmer, "to rise. That's it, everybody stand up. Now, I want every one of you . . . I understand we have upwards of seventy thousand people here today . . . I want every single one of you to stare directly at this fiend in human form, Ketteridge. I want you to let him know by the wondrous power that lies in the strength of your emotional reservoirs, I want you to let him know that he is a criminal, that he is worse than a murderer, that he has committed treason, that he is not loved by anyone, anywhere in the universe, and that he is, rather, despised with a vigor equal in heat to the power of the sun itself!"

People around Traub were shaking their fists now. Their eyes were narrowed, their mouths turned down at the corners. A woman fainted.

"Come on," shouted Weltmer. "Let's feel it!"

Under the spell of the speaker Traub was suddenly horrified to find that his blood was racing, his heart pounding. He felt anger surging up in him. He could not believe he hated Ketteridge. But he could not deny he hated something.

"On the souls of your mothers," Weltmer was saying, "on the future of your children, out of your love for your country, I demand of you that you unleash your power to despise. I want you to become ferocious. I want you to become as the beasts of the jungle, as furious as they in the defense of their homes. 'Do you hate this man?'"

"Yes!" roared the crowd.

"Fiend!" cried Weltmer, "Enemy of the people! Do you hear, Ketteridge?"

Traub watched in dry-mouthed fascination as the slumped figure in the chair straightened up convulsively and jerked at his collar. At this first indication that their power was reaching home the crowd roared to a new peak of excitement.

"We plead," said Weltmer, "with you people watching today on your television sets, to join with us in hating this wretch. All over America stand up, if you will, in your living rooms. Face the East. Face New York City, and let anger flood your hearts. Speak it out, let it flow!"

A man beside Traub sat down, turned aside, and vomited softly into a handkerchief. Traub picked up the binoculars the man had discarded for the moment and fastened them on Ketteridge's figure, twirling the focus-knob furiously. In a moment the man leaped into the foreground. Traub saw that his eyes were full of tears, that his body was wracked with sobs, that he was in obvious pain.

"He is not fit to live," Weltmer was shouting. "Turn your anger upon him. Channel it. Make it productive. Be not angry with your family, your friends, your fellow citizens, but let your anger pour out in a violent torrent on the head of this human devil," screamed Weltmer. "Come on! Let's do it! Let's get it over with!"

At that moment Traub was at last convinced of the enormity of Ketteridge's crime, and Weltmer said, "All right, that's it. Now let's get down to brass tacks. Let's concentrate on his right arm. Hate it, do you hear. Burn the flesh from the bone! You can do it! Come on! Burn him alive!"

TRAUB stared unblinking through the binoculars at Ketteridge's right arm as the prisoner leaped to his feet and ripped off his jacket, howling. With his left hand he gripped his right forearm and then Traub saw the flesh turning dark. First a deep red and then a livid purple. The fingers contracted and Ketteridge whirled on his small platform like a dervish, slapping his arm against his side.

"That's it," Weltmer called. "You're doing it. You're doing it. Mind over matter! That's it. Burn this offending flesh. Be as the avenging angels of the Lord. Smite this devil! That's it!"

The flesh was turning darker now, across the shoulders, as Ketteridge tore his shirt off. Screaming, he broke away from his chair and leaped off the platform, landing on his knees on the grass.

"Oh, the power is wonderful," cried Weltmer. "You've got him. Now let's really turn it on. Come on!"

Ketteridge writhed on the grass and then rose and began running back and forth, directionless, like a bug on a griddle.

Traub could watch no longer. He put down the binoculars and staggered back up the aisle.

Outside the stadium he walked for 12 blocks before he hailed a cab.

—BY STEVE ALLEN



# FIVE SECONDS TO DEATH

BY CHARLES FLANAGAN



*Three pilots before him had tried—and disintegrated.*

*He didn't have to fly it. He'd already proved his courage,  
and now he had his wife, his home, and his future sons to think of.*

MIKE ROGERS limped out on the broad porch of his ranch house, zippering his jacket and instinctively appraising the morning shimmer of the California sky.

He thought: *A good day for flying.*

Then he grinned, remembering the phone call of a few minutes ago, and corrected himself: *No, a good day for staying on the ground. No more test-piloting for you, Mike, not after today. No more leaving Linda and taking off in some fighting-plane designer's dreamboat to see if his slide rule slipped. No more wondering if you'll step out of the cockpit after you land, before you land, or not at all. After today, after all the tough years of working toward it, you're going to be a full-time stock rancher, a sane and solid character who'll never get any higher than the back of a horse. As of that phone call, you've grounded yourself for good.*

He lazied to the edge of the porch, wincing a little as the misfit bones in his right ankle made their usual morning protest, hearing Linda sing one of her wordless songs while she cooked breakfast in the kitchen, listening to the calls of birds in the willow beyond the stable. He felt a warm glow of peace.

*Now I'm my own age, he thought. Now I'm 34, not a tired 70.*

He lit a cigarette, the corkscrew of smoke swirling up toward the stippling of gray in his dark temples. He leaned a tall shoulder against a pillar of the porch and looked contentedly out over his rolling acres of God's good earth.

Below the house, in the corral, fat old Pablo had a saddle slung over the top rail, all of his brown roundness focused on the needle with which he mended a bit of torn stitching. Beyond the stable, in the pasture, the nine colts galloped bouncingly or grazed near their mothers; and a hundred yards up the hill from them, regal and aloof, Emir whisked his tail beside an oak.

Mike put his fingers to his lips and whistled. The white Arabian tossed his head, gazing across the valley at the tile-roofed ranch house. Then, as if recognizing the sound as a greeting and not as a summons, he turned to charge up the slope.

His hoofbeats, Mike thought, were like the thrum of unsynchronized engines on a bomber, the ripple of his muscles beautiful as the flutter of parachute silk; and he chuckled at himself, realizing that although he was now only a rancher, he would always think in terms of the air.

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Illustrated by MILLER POPE



Pablo flashed his white teeth at the porch. "You ride him before breakfast, Señor Miguel?"

"No, Pablo. I've got to go in to the field. I'll take him out tomorrow."

"Is better. Trainer come today. *Mañana*, maybe he don't sunfish no more."

"Maybe," Mike said. But as he watched Emir top the hill and become a white statue against the blue sky, he momentarily forgot even the phone call in wondering how any trainer could cure a horse that got spells of thinking himself a whirling dervish.

That sunfishing was the Arabian's one fault. Ride him all day, keeping a tight hand on the reins, and he'd obey as perfectly as the best stallion in the San Fernando Valley. But slack off, just once, and he'd put his head down and begin whirling; and his spins, always to the right, would grow faster and more forceful until he'd thrown you from the saddle as a sling throws a stone. Luck that sunfishing, and he could take blue ribbons at any show in Southern California. But until he'd been broken off it—

The kitchen screen door twanged into Mike's thoughts, and Linda said: "Dear, will you help me with this tray?"

He hurried toward her, hiding his limp. Their fingers touched when he took the breakfast tray; as he always did, he felt a tingle.

"Who was on the phone just now?" she said.

"A man," Mike said, deciding to tease her.

"Any particular man?"

"One of your old sweethearts," Mike said. He followed her to the table at the end of the porch.

She rattled silver and china onto the tablecloth. "Now, Mike—"

Linda broke off, holding his filled plate across the table, her eyes suddenly reading his face. "Mike, was it *the* man? The one who came out yesterday to look at the colts?"

Mike grinned. "Seems as though."

"For Heaven's sake, Mike, don't just sit there! What did he say?"

"He's made up his mind," Mike said. "He'll take all nine of them."

He saw her swallow. "At your price?"

"That's right. A thousand apiece."

"Oh, darling, *darling!*"

He heard the plate thump down before him, but he could not see it; Linda had darted across the table, and her arms were around his neck, and the sudden moisture on the cheek he was kissing was her tears of relief.

"Oh, darling, darling," she was still saying. "Now you can keep your promise. We can finish paying up for the ranch and you can quit!"

"Honey," Mike said, "that's exactly what I'm going to do. I'm turning in my resignation this morning."

"I love you. I really do." Linda sat back in her chair, dabbing at her gray eyes with the corner of a napkin. She gave him a wet smile. "Only, why didn't you tell me right away, you big lug?"

"You know me," Mike said. "With you, I always like to buzz the field before I make a landing."

"You certainly do." Their eyes and their thoughts met across the table, and he saw her reden. "Getting back to Topic B," she said quickly, "are you sure Continental's going to let you quit?"

"Will Brown will put up plenty of arguments," Mike said, "but I'll tune him out. It would be different if he had a new plane coming up soon. Naturally, I wouldn't leave until I'd made the first flight. But that Airserpent job is at least six months away from take-off, so Will will have plenty of time to pick a new chief."

Linda shuddered. "Airserpent. What an ugly name!"

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## make it easy

A SMALL hook-and-eye latch, painted to match, and placed on the upper corner of the medicine cabinet, closet or darkroom, prevents children from getting into trouble.

—Arthur Kent, Bedford, Mass.

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"They say it'll be a sweet ship, if it flies."

"If it does?"

"You don't stick your neck out on those super-sonic jobs, honey," Mike told her. "Plenty of things can happen when you try to push a ship through the sonic barrier and fly faster than sound. All I know is that they've been working on the Airserpent in a locked hangar for a year. According to the field scuttlebutt, she's designed to do nine hundred miles an hour, with a service ceiling of 80 thousand feet."

"That's more than 15 miles, straight up!"

"Straight down, too," Mike said.

"Anyway, I'm glad you won't be testing it."

*Maybe I'm glad too*, Mike thought. Bailing out at 30 thousand three years ago, in a reciprocating-engine deal, had hurled him against a tail fin and smashed his ankle. Bailing out at 80 thousand in a jet job doing 900 or better—well, it just wouldn't be worth the trouble.

He picked up his fork, his eyes again going automatically to the sky. He felt Linda watching him. He brought his eyes down.

"I wonder if you really are going to quit flying," she said.

"Sure for certain," Mike said. "After today, honey, that stuff up there is just blueness buttered

with sunshine. From here on in, I've got both feet on good old Mama Dirt."

But as he bent to his food, he sensed once more the pull of the sky.

An hour later, in his office at Continental Aircraft, Mike wrote out his resignation. *To take effect immediately*, it read; and he was signing it when his phone rang.

Will Brown's big voice boomed through the receiver. "Mike, can you come in right away, kid? Got something I want to chin with you about."

"Sure. I want to see you, too, Will."

He stood, folding the resignation and putting it in his jacket pocket. His gaze flicked across the row of framed photographs on the wall, the faces of the three men who had preceded him in this office and this job.

Lean, dark-eyed Tom Adams had been Continental's chief test-pilot back when oxygen was first used for high-altitude flying. He had made the initial test of a new system: it was the chief's job to try the new things first. He had reached 25 thousand feet when the tricky regulator valve froze; and when he tore the mask off . . .

The valve had been redesigned, and boyish-faced Ray Harris had moved into the chief's office. Continental built a new fighter whose controls persisted in blanking out during dives. Harris spent days diving from 30 thousand feet, trying to find the cause. He located it, radioed a jubilant report to the ground engineers; and then, perhaps as sort of a victory celebration, made one more dive. . . .

The ship had been changed as Harris had directed in his last report. Big Ben Smith, the new chief, took it up, dived it, and survived. He survived, in fact, to test Continental's first jet fighter, to fly it a hundred hours without trouble. Then, during a routine take-off, a fuel line broke in the cockpit. . . .

The line was rerouted, and when Mike took over Big Ben's job, there was only a remote chance of his dying in a spray of blazing fuel. And now. . . .

Mike lifted his hand in a half-salute at the row of faces. *So long, guys! I'm getting out while I've got nothing worse than a game leg.*

He went down the long hallway to the door that said, WILL BROWN, ENGINEERING TEST FLIGHT. Brown's desk was cluttered with coffee cups and overflowing ashtrays, and his round, normally cheerful face was gray with weariness.

"Sit down, kid," he said. "I've just finished an all-night hassle with some of the top boys in the Air Force." He stood, pushing a folder across the desk. "Take a look at this, will you, Mike, while I try to wake myself up?"

Mike reached for the resignation in his pocket. "What I wanted to see you about, Will—"

He stopped, realizing Brown could not hear him. The engineer was at the washbasin in a cor-

ner of the office, noisily splashing cold water in his face.

Mike shoved the letter back. He sat down and picked up the folder, recognizing the form as Continental's engineering report on planes under construction. He glanced over its neat paragraphs, his mind still on his resignation:

*Air temperatures will vary from Minus 150 F. to Minus 200 F. . . .*

*Until ejection seat is developed for this ship, pilot cannot bail out at flying speeds. . . .*

*At 80,000 feet, atmospheric pressure will be. . . .*

Mike blinked, the words finally registering on him. He brought his eyes back to the top of the page. He read: TOP SECRET—AEROPHYSICAL DATA, *Airserpent*.

He closed the folder. He put it carefully on Brown's desk.

The engineer came back, scrubbing a grin into his face with a towel. He nodded at the report. "How you like, kid?"

"Nice job of typing," Mike said. He tried to keep his tone casual. "When do you get her off the paper and into the air?"

"Tomorrow," Brown said.

Mike felt the tendons at the back of his knees begin to tighten. "I've heard talk it would be at least six months before she'd fly."

"Yeah," Brown said. "Like I told the Air Force guys last night, the ship's finished, but we're running into grief on the wind-tunnel tests. We need anyway half a year more to iron the bugs out before we take her up. But they'd flown out from Washington especially to rush the Airserpent along, and after they told me the reason for their rush, I said we'd be plenty cooperative."

He dried his hands carefully on the towel.

MIKE, when you were a kid, was there some brat down in the next block who loved to bop you with a stick and then run home to his big brother before you could hit him back?"

"Sometimes I caught him," Mike said.

"You can't catch this one," Brown said. "Not yet, anyway. He's developed a bomber that can fly faster and higher than any pursuit ship we've got. He can come over at an altitude we can't touch, drop the bomb, and be back home before the dust settles."

"I see," Mike said.

"So we got us a rush job, kid. We've got to get the Airserpent up, and try to find out what's wrong with her under actual flying conditions. If we're lucky as hell, we locate the trouble and save ourselves six months. If we're not so lucky—" He shrugged and tossed the towel at the basin.

Mike watched it hurtle through the air. It struck the edge of the bowl, clung there an instant, then dropped into a shapeless mound on the floor.

He took a deep breath. "What's the trouble with the ship?"

"God knows," Brown said. "Come out to the hangar and take a guess."

THE AIRSERPENT stood in the yellow haze of the big hangar, its nose hoisted high while mechanics made a final adjustment of its landing gear; and Mike thought of a picture he had once seen of a snake captured by a spider. At any moment, he thought, the long, ugly body might break loose from the radiating web of cables and ladders, might crush and kill the knots of men around it.

"How you like?" Brown said.

Mike shook his head. He left Brown beside the door and limped around the ship, studying the swept-back wings and the gaping double airducts, like a cobra's hood, that had given the ship its name. He put a hand on the fuselage. The metal was dead cold, the cold of a snake.

He returned to Brown, feeling an icy tingle along his spine as he turned his back on the ship.

"No like," he said. "There's something wrong with her. I can feel it."

"Give your instinct an A," Brown said. "Every time we put a model of her in the wind tunnel, she operates like a charm till she hits the speed of sound. Then she goes into a flat spin, and the model tears itself apart."

"It could be the compressibility characteristics of the tunnel," Mike said.

"Hell, kid, the engineers have been fighting about that for a year. One faction went ahead and built the ship while the others were still arguing. Up until now, I've refused to let anybody fly her until the model behaved right. But now—"

"Yes," Mike said. "Now we've got to find out. All right, Will. I'll take her up tomorrow."

"No," Brown said. "Not you."

"What?"

"You're too valuable to Continental, kid. I want you to assign somebody else."

"Look," Mike said. "It's the chief test-pilot's job to make first flights."

"Oh, to hell with that Sir Galahad tradition you test guys have got!" Brown poked a thick finger at Mike's chest. "Listen, kid. This job doesn't need your judgment and experience. The Airserpent will carry a radio unit that broadcasts all the instrument readings, so I can watch every step of her performance from the ground. All she needs is a pilot with enough guts to edge her up to sonic speed and enough talent to pull her out if she starts spinning."

"If she'll pull out," Mike said.

"Any of your regular test pilots could handle it. Bob Larson, for instance."

"Yes," Mike said slowly. "Bob's a good man."

He saw Brown watching him, waiting for him to speak. "Well, kid, how's about telling Bob?"

Mike took a breath. "Okay. He's it."

"Good, Mike." Brown grinned. "She'll be ready to roll out by noon. Bob can start the brake and taxi tests today, and take her up tomorrow morning. I'd like to have you with me on the ground radio, in case he needs any advice."

Mike looked at the long, ugly ship. "Right," he said; and he felt as if the word came from someone else.

"Oh, say, kid. Didn't you say you had something you wanted to talk to me about?"

Mike slid his hand into his jacket pocket. It touched the crisp paper of his resignation. *No. Will is going to need me tomorrow. I can turn it in after the ship's been flown.*

"It can wait," he said. "I've got to find Bob."

The sky seemed to draw him as he went out the hangar door. . . .

It was dusk when he drove through the gateway of the ranch. The day had drained him. He had spent the morning going over the aerophysical report with Bob Larson, and the afternoon helping him check and recheck the Airserpent's ground tests, but it was not the thought and labor that had wearied him.

The fatigue was deeper than that: it was the weight of something in his mind, something as formless as the wisps of night mist now edging down from the range of hills between the ranch and the sea, something that was no more than an *if*.

HE tried to put it out of his thoughts as he braked the car beside the corral. Pablo leaned on the rail, a *cigarillo* glowing against the roundness of his face, and behind him Emir stamped in the warm shadows.

"Trainer come, Pablo?"

"Sí." The Mexican lifted his shoulders and let them fall. "He's work with this horse all afternoon. Then he's give him up."

"Couldn't cure the sunfishing, eh?"

"He's say nobody ever cure. He's say, this horse he's maybe worth more as this ranch if he's cure. But this way—"

"I know," Mike said. "Just a good stud horse."

Pablo spread his hands philosophically. "*Pero*, is not too bad, maybe. He's give the world something, eh?"

Mike did not answer. He went on up to the house, feeling the surge of its emptiness as he opened the door. He found Linda's note on the living-room table:

*Dear: With all the news this morning, I forgot to tell you I'd made a date with Mrs. Wagner to come over this afternoon and take me in to town. Don't wait up—we might stay and see a movie after I've finished my business. You'll find dinner in the oven—and it's you I'm lovin'!*



He grinned at her row of X's, wondering what her business in town might be. Shopping, probably. It had been a long time since Linda had bought any new clothes. Well, she could have them now, if...

There it was again, the question that had haunted him all day, the problem that could not be solved because it was not even stated. If *what?*

The thing hung over him while he ate; it was with him afterward, while he sat on the porch and watched the purple shadows turn into ink on gold as the moon came up. This ranch, he thought, was the one thing Linda and he had wanted ever since they had found each other. Now it was theirs. Tomorrow, after the Airserpent had been flown and he had given his resignation to Will Brown, it would be theirs forever—if. If *what?*

A man couldn't answer a question when the question itself was only a feeling inside him, a feeling like flying blind through fog. He went to bed to let sleep erase it from his mind.

But it was still there, hours later, and he was still awake, when a car surged up the drive and stopped. The music of Linda's voice said: "Good night, Mrs. Wagner. Thanks for taking me to the doctor."

*Doctor?*

"Good night, dear," the other woman said. "I hope it's going to be a boy."

Mike blinked his eyes open, staring at the moonlight on the wall while Linda's footsteps crossed the yard and the screen door twanged. The sudden realization was like a shout of joy within him. He opened his lips; and then, on the verge of calling to Linda, the formless question confronted him again: If—

He closed his eyes as the faint eddy of Linda's perfume came into the room. "Mike?" she said softly.

He did not move. He wanted to talk, to tell her of his happiness; but if they talked of that, later she would ask about his resignation. And the resignation, he now felt, was somehow part of the if, the unstated problem.

THERE WAS movement, the rush of silk, the snap of fasteners; then Linda was in her bed beside his, and almost at once her breathing was the rhythm of sleep.

Mike opened his eyes again and wondered how it would seem to be a father. "I hope it's going to be a boy," the woman had said. Yes, a boy would be good. When a man had a son to teach, to pass on the things he himself had learned, he could feel that his life had purpose. As Pablo had said of the horse, he could give the world something.

*Purpose. Passing things on. Giving the world something...*

The fog within him suddenly cleared.

*It's like being a test pilot, he thought. A man*



*leads the way; he makes things safer and better for those who follow him. Like Tom Adams, and Ray Harris, and Big Ben Smith. They died, but in their dying they extended the limits of flight, they saved the lives of thousands of other pilots...*

He saw the question that had shadowed him. He saw the only possible answer. He saw the two things that he must do.

He arose and dressed quietly, not even zippering his jacket lest the noise arouse Linda. He got his riding boots from the closet. Then he bent over Linda and breathed a kiss toward the tumbled gold of her hair. Boots in hand, he went softly out to the stable.

In the tack-room, moving softly lest he awaken Pablo in his bunk next door, he clamped a pair of spurs to the boot heels. Then he took a saddle and bridle to the corral.

Emir came toward him in the moonlight, his hoofs soft on the yellow dust. He stood still while Mike saddled him; with the bit in his mouth he began to prance. Mike led him to the gate and held the reins firmly while he pushed it open toward the pasture. Then, thankful that his good ankle was the left one, he swung into the saddle.

He patted the stallion's quivering neck muscles, pulling the reins tight. "All right, Emir. Let's go."

The horse moved through the gate and into the field. Out of earshot of the house, Mike stopped him. Then, a fraction of an inch at a time, he slackened the reins.

Emir whistled. He lowered his head. He began to whirl in a tight circle to the right. Mike felt himself slump forward, half out of the saddle.

Fighting the momentum of the swing, he pulled himself upright. And then, without thinking, as

if the impulse came from somewhere outside him, he raked his right spur up and down the corded muscles of Emir's shoulder, an action which should have made him turn all the faster to the right.

The stallion stopped abruptly. He lifted his head. He stood still.

Mike heard the blood pounding in his ears. He pulled on the reins, then slackened them again. Once more the white Arabian began whirling to the right. Again Mike dug with his right spur. Again the animal stopped.

Mike held his breath. He let the reins go one more time. The horse's head dropped an inch. It hesitated. It lifted. He stood motionless.

Mike drew the cold, clear air of dawn into his lungs. He clucked his tongue. Emir leaped obediently forward. Together, horse and master, they moved swiftly up the moonlit hill.

**W**ILL BROWN, waiting on the apron of the hangar beside the Airserpent, let his mouth fall open as Mike limped up to the ship in his flying suit. "Where in hell's Bob Larson?"

"Waiting in my office," Mike said. "He'll take over after I make the first flight."

"Damn it, kid, I told you to assign somebody—"

"I assigned myself," Mike told him quietly. "I'm still chief test-pilot, Will."

The engineer parted his lips in the beginning of an angry protest. He closed them, looking at Mike's face. He sighed and shook his head. "Okay, kid. Maybe you Sir Galahad guys have got a reason nobody knows anything about."

"We have," Mike said. He climbed the ladder into the cockpit, feeling the ugly coldness of the ship close around him.

The mechanics rolled the ship onto the runway and swung it toward the far end of the field. Mike put on his oxygen mask and turned the control valve to *Full Open*. He checked the rudder and aileron controls. He slid the canopy closed, feeling as if he could reach out through it and touch the tips of the ship's swept-back wings. He swallowed. He pushed the buttons that fired the jets.

The driving flames of the ship flared into life with the roar of a thousand blowtorches. The ship moved forward, Mike testing the brakes as he taxied to the end of the runway. He parked there, checking the fuel, brake and pressure pumps and scanning the instruments. The Mach gauge caught his eye; he had not noticed before that the instrument which registered, not miles per hour, but speed as compared with that of sound, was calibrated to twice sonic speed.

*The engineers expect a lot of this ship, he thought. Well, they'll soon find out if it's got it.*

He adjusted the flame mixture and flipped the fuel pumps to *High*. He called the tower for take-off clearance.

The plane leaped from the ground when he fired the JATO bottles three-quarters of the way down the runway, their assisting jets adding impetus to those in the fuselage. He made a wide circle and came back across the field in level flight.

The ship handled beautifully at this relatively low speed and altitude, but what it might do higher and faster was still unknown. He took it up to 10,000 feet and stalled the plane to get his landing speed. It would be about 130 miles, he estimated. *If he landed. If . . .*

He put the plane in a bank, looking northward toward the mountains next to the sea. He saw the small red dot of the ranch-house roof, the puckered pocket of his valley. Linda was there, perhaps still asleep. He pulled his eyes back to the cockpit. He eased the throttles forward.

Almost without slowing its forward speed, the rate of climb went up to 5,000 feet a minute. The hands of the altimeter began chasing each other around the dial. The outside temperature gauge dropped to 130 below zero. He glanced over his shoulder; trails of vapor were billowing from the wingtips, making a long plume of frozen crystals behind him.

A miniature snowfall began to drift lazily through the cockpit, and his eyes went back to the Mach gauge. When he began the test, that would be the one to watch: his speed in relation to sound. He eased back on the throttles when the altimeter showed 75,000, and leveled out at 80,000.

Brown's voice came into his radio headphones. "All right, kid. Take it easy, now."

Mike did not answer. He had ceased to be a human being, he felt; he was a machine, a part of

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## make it easy

WHEN freezing rain hits your wooden steps and puts a quarter inch of glare ice on them, skip the salt or ashes. Just take a wooden or rubber mallet, or a block of wood and a regular hammer, and hit the step along the center. The ice will crack and bounce right off.

—E. E. Shaffer, Harrisburg, Pa.

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the Airserpent. All of his knowledge, all of his years of experience were fastened to its instruments and controls. Slowly he opened the throttles, watching the Mach gauge.

The needle crept past seven, eight, nine. . . . Ten would be the speed of sound.

The nose of the ship began a gentle rise and fall. The right rudder pressed against his foot. He looked at the gyro compass: the ship was mak-

ing a sharp, skidding turn to the right, the same flat spin its model had shown in the wind tunnel.

He eased back on the throttles. The Mach gauge sank back to nine. The Airserpent resumed straight flight.

He heard Brown's voice in his headphones. The engineer was talking with the other men around the recording instruments on the ground. "God help us! We're no closer to it than we were a year ago!"

Mike looked back at the Mach gauge. Give her one more try. Maybe you still can lick it.

He pushed the throttles open again. The needle eased toward 10, crossed it. Now the ship was flying fast as sound; and again it was snapping into its fast flat turn to the right.

Mike pushed on the left rudder, first gently, then with every ounce his muscles could give. His body slammed against the side of the cockpit. The turn became faster. He felt himself beginning to black out.

Fighting tons of momentum, he yanked the throttles off, dumped the dive flaps, and fought to keep the plane from spinning as it slowed down. His heart felt as if a mallet were pounding the inside of his ribs. He opened his clenched lips and sucked in deep draughts of pure oxygen; and as his brain cleared, he heard Brown's voice:

"All right, kid. Stop being a damn fool. Bring her down!"

Mike pressed the transmitter against his throat. "Okay, Will. Coming down."

He looked regretfully at the Mach gauge. There was the needle; there were the unattainable numbers on the dial. It might take years to bring them together. Well, he'd done everything a man could. He was still alive. Now he could turn in his resignation.

He banked, looking down at the earth 15 miles away. The cities and towns were geometric squares of green and gray; the ocean was a vast, shining sheet of polished metal, curving with the earth. And just this side of it, in the green wrinkle of hills, was the ranch.

In 30 minutes he would be on the ground. An hour more, and he would be home. After that, forever, there would be nothing more than Linda and the ranch, and maybe Mike the Second.

*How clear it is, he thought. And how close!*

He swallowed, suddenly thinking how close and how clear the things he saw would look through the sights of a bomber cruising leisurely beyond the sonic barrier and picking out its target with the confident knowledge that it could run away from anything America could send up. A ship like that Will Brown had hinted at, a ship that could fly higher and faster than anything on earth. . . .

He made up his mind. He looked again to-

ward the small spot on the earth where Linda was. *I'm sorry, honey. This has to be.*

He raised the dive flaps and pushed the throttles wide open. He was slammed against the back of the seat, then to the side of the cockpit as again the Airserpent snapped into its fast, flat, right turn. There was no use pushing on the left rudder to correct it. His only hope was that the ground engineers might find a clue to help them before the plane tore itself apart.

On the third whipping turn, he was unable to hold his body upright. He slumped forward as he had done at dawn on Emir's back. And then, as automatically as he had spurred Emir in the direction toward which he was turning, he shoved his foot on the Airserpent's right rudder. The plane began to buck and vibrate wildly. There was a roaring scream in his ears. This, he knew, was how the others had gone. This for five seconds . . . then disintegration. He was five seconds from death.

It was then that it happened. The plane wavered. Its turn began to decrease. Mike's ankle started to throb, but he pushed with all of his weight; and slowly, as if reluctant, the Airserpent began a gradual turn to the left. The abnormal air-flow through the sonic barrier had, of course, reversed the controls while the ship passed through it.

He forced his body upright and equalized the pressure on the rudder pedals. His vision cleared. He looked at the Mach gauge. The needle had moved past 14. It was still climbing. The plane, silent, smooth and effortless as a glider, was flying almost a half faster than the speed of sound.

Mike eased back on the throttles. He let the speed drop, jockeying the rudder until the Mach gauge dropped under 10. He lowered the dive flaps and started down.

It was then that he became aware of the jubilant shouting of the ground engineers in his headphones. "Kid," Brown's voice was booming, "You've done it! Come on down! You can have anything you want!"

Mike snapped off the radio.

*What do I want? What does any man want? Does he want peace, security, just for himself and his own little slice of the earth? Or does he want it for all the people he can give it to? Doesn't he want to give the world something, something only he can give?*

Mike opened his flying suit and slid a hand in to the pocket of his jacket. He brought out the resignation. Forcing the canopy back a crack, he slid the paper through; it flashed away in the slipstream.

*Linda will understand, he thought.*

He flew the ship down toward God's green earth, but for a long time he watched the sky.

—BY CHARLES FLANAGAN

## ***MEN YOU NEVER KNOW:***

Bill Commons, left, and his top aide, John Sambucci, grab a coffee break after the morning rush has eased.



# Gas Station Operator

BY HAROLD MEHLING



Photos by Bill Lewis

Right now Bill Commons is being slowly throttled by a price war. In the mornings he runs, not walks, to make change, and always there's the driver who gets you out in the rain to ask which way Boston is. Despite these drawbacks, Bill likes being his own boss, still has a big dream for his business and his family.

**W**HILE BILL COMMONS was flying inland from Normandy Beach in the early hours of D-day, he did what many soldiers do as they approach H-hour. He tried to fasten onto a piece of the future. The 19-year-old kid thought again about his three postwar dreams: ice-cream sodas, butter, and a gasoline station.

Five minutes later the flak-shattered C-47 was still two miles short of its destination, but it had faltered to 500 feet and Bill and 21 other paratroopers had to get out of there. Bill was among the 18 who made it, which allowed him time to get his discharge papers and pursue his dreams further.

Today, at 29, William Henry Commons is one of the fellows you rarely give much more than a glance to when you pull into a gasoline service station and say, "Fill it up," or "A dollar-fifty's worth." He makes his living by pumping gas, greasing chassis, draining oil crankcases, patching inner tubes, and selling a variety of automobile accessories. He also has to provide certain services without charge, such as wiping windshields, checking tires and batteries and radiators, and giving road information.

The only time these free services rub him is when an information-seeker drives up in the pour-



Rush hour: Bill and his helpers save precious minutes running between the gas-pumps and the cash register.

ing rain and stops in front of the gas pumps instead of the station office. When the no-sale departs, Bill returns to the office soaking wet and stares through the window, a thoughtful expression on his lean, slightly bony face.

To find out what a service-station man thinks about us and our cars, and what his life and his business are like, I spent several days with Bill Commons. He is about as typical as any one operator can be in a field so huge.

There are 200,000 service stations from Key West to Aberdeen, and dozens of companies behind them. One, the Texas Company, is represented in all 48 states. Bill Commons is a Texaco dealer. His station sits on the southern line of New Milford, a town of nearly 15,000 in the residential-woodsy northeast corner of New Jersey. You can tank up there from 6:30 on any weekday morning, and from 8 o'clock on Sundays.

To have his pumps ready to flow at 6:30, Bill rises at 5:15 A.M. I walked in at 5:25 while he was shaving in one of the two bathrooms (the finished one) of his comfortable, three-bedroom house in River Vale, eight miles from New Milford. We tipped around and, without waking Bill's wife and three kids, had orange juice and coffee. Bill eats no more for breakfast and we were ready to start out for the station at 6.

During the dawnlit drive in his half-ton Chev-



A youngster fills his tires—one of the many free services the public takes for granted.



rolet pick-up truck, Bill gave an early sign that he thinks of more than gasoline. He talked of a resentment that nags him.

"Some people seem to think that only dopes work in gas stations," he said. "They think attendants are dummies and this business is their last resort. Or you get the other kind who expects a service-station attendant to be a scientist and an engineer."

Why does a man get into this business, then?

"Well, here's one reason. Bendix Aviation has a big plant not far from the station. Some of the people who think we're dopes work there. War orders slow down and they get laid off. What's so good about that?"

Bill's irritation softened into a smile. His teeth are chalk white, in strong contrast to his dark beard, curly brown hair and green-gray eyes. We drove into New Milford along deserted streets and at 6:15 picked up John Sambucci, Bill's second in command, on a street corner. Sambucci, a chunky but smooth-moving man of 30, yawned and delivered what seemed to be a familiar greeting.

"One of these mornings I won't be here, Bill."

"Where you goin', John?"

"A beach somewhere. A shack on a beach. I'll be a beachcomber. The hell with pumping gas."

Bill's laugh was confident. "You'll be here, John," he said. At the corner of River Road and New Bridge he turned into the driveway of his station and parked before the car-wash bay. It was 6:20.

Bill unlocked the office and the three lubrication-and-wash-bay doors. He flicked the switch that

activates the electrical pumps, picked up a clipboard and went out to read the previous day's gallonage on the pump meters. John pulled the bay doors open and counted the oil cans and tires. Nothing was missing. Then he lugged out the display racks, including one that read "Tire Bargains." Bill setup the cash register. As he counted out rolls of change John hooked up the air hose, set out the water cans and stocked the windshield cleaning cabinets with paper wipes and a spray solution.

A bell sounded as a mileage-beaten Plymouth drove in and creased the signal hose that stretched along the station's front edge.

### Buying by the Wallet

"A dollar's worth," said a man who fiddled with a briefcase and looked like a salesman. John murmured, "Today is Thursday. They buy by the wallet. Tomorrow's payday. Then they'll buy by the gallon."

Between 6:30 and 7 o'clock four cars were handled in the midst of the opening routine. But at 7 the tempo shifted abruptly. Cars lined up before both pairs of pumps, some for regular gasoline, others for high-test. Bill worked one pair, John the other. No motorist received less than a "Good morning," no matter what work the attendant was involved in at the time.

"You've got to do something to keep 'em here," Bill explained. "When people stop for gas on their way to work they usually allow one minute flat for it, and you've got to move. We try to start a second car off in some way while the automatic nozzle is filling the first car's tank. Maybe a windshield



Bill talks to an applicant for a job in the station. Right: P. S.—He got the job, and here works the gun in a grease pit.



Here's what a price war looks like. Note signs on this road in N. J., where no one dares charge more.

wipe, maybe only a wave. But you've got to do something besides keep 'em waiting or they'll pull out and load up somewhere else. And they won't come back again."

Bill doesn't believe in belt-hung coin changers. He thinks they cause errors and forgetfulness. So all transactions are handled through the cash register in the office. The register is 26 steps running, walking, from either set of pumps if the customer doesn't have the right change.

"We run in the morning," Bill said. "That's why we walk the rest of the day."

By 8:30 the flow of cars slows off. John Sambucci starts a pot of coffee perking on a two-burner hot plate in the rear of the lube bay nearest the office. Sometimes it may be an hour before a cup is poured. John must clean up an oil mess left by the two night-shift men. Or a grease job comes in and the driver is, of course, in a hurry. Or flat tires show up. Or both arrive together, and stray gasoline customers combine to keep both men hopping. Flats at \$1 and lube jobs at \$1.50 are not to be treated lightly. They are two of the scores of items that make a profitable enterprise.

The big trouble with Bill Commons' enterprise is that at the moment it's not very profitable. "Not by a damn sight," he says. This is what a businessman often says when he means he's doing fine but would like to be doing better. A look at Commons' books, though, reveals that his plight is genuine.

Ordinarily Bill would have little or nothing to complain about. His is the largest, in size and in gallonage pumped, of New Milford's six service stations. Normally he hoses out about 24,000 gallons of regular gasoline a month, at 26.9 cents a gallon,

plus about 16,000 gallons of high-test, at 29.9 cents. He pays 20.2 cents and 22.7 cents a gallon, respectively, to Texaco, these figures including the state and federal taxes. Thus, his average margin being between six and seven cents a gallon, his normal gross profit on gasoline sales is about \$2,600 a month. This is a healthy figure.

But, at this writing, all is not healthy in the service-station business in New Jersey. The state is one of those that are periodically beset by a turbulent economic phenomenon known as a price war. For an operator like Bill, a price war is a treadmill. He is running faster than ever, and pumping more gallonage than ever, and making far less money. The reason can be seen in the huge signs that mark almost every service station in Jersey. Most of them blazon, in figures two feet high, "21.9."

When Bill and others sell regular gas for 21.9 cents, and high-test for 26.9 cents, they are actually operating at a loss when their overhead is included. They are paying the same price they normally do for their stocks, which means their gross profit is down to 1.7 cents a gallon on regular and 4.2 cents on high-test. Bill says that it's even less by the time, he pays his bills. This is a difference of opinion he has with his supplier.

"They say we make 1.7 cents a gallon on regular," he says. "But I pay rent for this station at an average rate of 1.1 cents a gallon. That's the way the cost of the franchise is figured in most of these arrangements. So when you take that 1.1 out, only .6 of a cent is left on regular."

As if to illustrate Bill's thesis, a big Hudson rolled in and a woman leaned out and asked for four gallons of regular. Bill stuck the gas nozzle into the Hudson's tank, set the automatic kick-off mechanism at slow and came around to the driver's side.

### Profit in Pennies

"Check your water and oil, ma'am?" He was wiping her windshield as he spoke. She said yes. Bill lifted the hood and found the radiator O.K., but had to add distilled water to two of the three battery cells. Now he moved quickly to the gas pump as the bell for the third gallon sounded. He hand-fed it up to four, then returned to the engine and checked the oil level. The dipstick was covered to "Full."

As the woman paid him 88 cents for the gas she said, "Would you check my tires, please?" Bill asked her to pull over to the air tower at the side. She did. The tires were fine. She pulled out and he returned to the office and rang up his 88 cents.

"Profit on that sale," he said, "comes to exactly two and four-tenths cents." He spoke without rancor. John Sambucci walked in with a cup of coffee and said, "If you ever find a nice beach somewhere, with a shack I can keep my family in, let me know, will you? Maybe I'll come back when this price war is over."

The Jersey gasoline price wars started in 1947, when a couple of stations in several areas knocked a cent or two off their prices. Others followed suit to meet the competition and in no time the war was blazing out of control. Everybody sold more gasoline and made less money and nobody knew how to stop it.

"One little station in Jersey City was pumping 10,000 gallons a month," Bill explains, "and making six cents a gallon. That gave the dealer \$600 a month on gas. When he cut the price two cents he jumped to 100,000 gallons, and made \$4,000 gross. He gave absolutely no service of any kind—just dragged 'em in on the price. But when the war spread and everybody had to cut, the individual station's sales leveled out again and—everybody started to take this beating."

### Murderous Warfare

Several uneasy truces occurred, but the war always flared anew. The operators call the one that's going on now "the price war to end all price wars," since they expect it to continue until prices are somehow protected. The intensity of the current battle can be gauged from the fact that when it began last February, some small operators got into such tough shape that the oil firms gave dealers rebates on their wholesale prices to keep them going. The dealers regarded these kick-backs as fresh ammunition and used them to chip away still further at prices. Their "circus signs" blazed "19.9" and even "17.9." Then the rebates halted and everyone dug in.

From his economic trench, Bill Commons presents a troubled but determined picture as he surveys the inroads already made in his grubstake. He's lucky to be clearing \$100 a week now. He was working on a hospitalization benefit plan for his seven employees, but instead he's had to let three of them go. The rest still get their \$65 a week (except for John Sambucci, who gets \$90), but they've all lost their commissions, which brought them an extra \$15 weekly. Bill used to take part of his crew out to dinner on alternate weeks, discuss station problems with them and pick up the check, but that has stopped, too. Sambucci has lost his vacation, at least for the time being. He talks about it a lot, usually working it into the middle of a gag, but Bill is aware that the humor of not getting an expected vacation can be quite thin. Bill is also aware that when this price rhubarb ends some day, many customers will in turn be resentful.

"The customers who know what we're going through feel sorry for us," he says, "but of course they can't help liking lower prices. I don't blame them, but they're getting to think these prices are permanent. They'll feel gypped when the figures go up again."

Until they do, Bill has to push harder on what gas station men call "TBA"—tires, batteries and accessories. That is the hard core of the operation.

Without TBA, on which markups run from 20 to 50 per cent, he would be wiped out. Profits on gas and oil sales and lube jobs cover his overhead; TBA pays mortgages and grocery and department store bills.

The T and the B are self-defining, but the accessories are numerous and their amount and variety are usually determined by the size of a service station. A sampling of what Bill carries includes windshield ice inhibitors, oil additives, upper cylinder lubricants, white sidewall cleaners, polishes and waxes, rust inhibitors, cooling-system sealers, chrome brighteners, mirrors, exhaust deflectors, fan belts, speedometer-cable lubricants, headlights, fuses, battery cables, spark plugs, brake fluid, valve caps and taillight bulbs.

Bill finds that tires generate a stubborn sales resistance. He is amazed at the rubber that people will stake their lives on time and again. "They spend a lot of money on doodads, but then they'll



John Sambucci on an emergency call to start a car that has a dead battery. The total charge: \$1.50.

let tires run until they're worn through three layers of fabric. When a hole finally runs through, they wonder if a boot won't give a tire a little more life. I just don't understand it."

Batteries are a simpler matter; if your battery conks out and won't take a charge, you need a new one. But here again, price-tags of from \$20 to \$30 cause fevers. Bill has lowered such temperatures by instituting a budget plan by which his customers can buy more costly items on time; he nibbles at their wallets weekly instead of taking one big bite.

Before you can sell a customer TBA, though, you have to get him in for gas. Bill found this out the hard way. Not long after the current price war



**Bill points out danger spots in a worn tire. He's amazed at the rubber people stake their lives on.**

started he rebelled at the skimpy profit in 21.9 cent gas and boosted his price to 22.9. In one month his pumps fell off 16,000 gallons, and his TBA sales plunged proportionately. He hurried back into the 21.9 cent line.

Bill uses this example to document another economic bone he picks with oil company sales departments. They contend, almost unanimously, that the average driver does not penny-hop from station to station, but rather selects his gas stop through such attractions as neatness and cleanliness of washrooms. This view is backed by the findings of recent motorist surveys, too.

"You won't find cleaner washrooms than ours anywhere," Bill says in mild rejoinder (and they are spotless), "but I'm still looking for the pennies I lost with that 16,000 gallons I dropped." He concedes, though, that the price war has undoubtedly made Jersey motorists more penny-conscious than usual, and that the surveys are correct in normal times.

When those normal times return Bill will still be working hours that would have been considered long back in 1880. His six-day week finds him at

the station from 6:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. On Sundays he works from 8 to 2 or 3. This gives him a 55- to 60-hour week, with Wednesdays off, unless one of his employees picks a Wednesday on which to fall ill. Such Wednesdays he is saving up to take off sometime in the future. The future, Bill says, will find him in the same business, at least as far ahead as he can see. He came into it because he liked it, but he can't say exactly what it was he liked.

About as close as he can come is to explain that when he was in his late teens he drove into a service station a couple of times with his sister, found it fascinating and decided that was for him. He thinks he is drawn by the challenge of selling and making the grade on his own, although this concept is only fairly firm. It is also specked with contradictions.

Bill finished high school, but he was never very happy with it. He wanted to get going, although he wasn't sure where. He delivered groceries after school on a bicycle and soon was delivering them in the grocer's truck. The grocer had confidence in him. On the other hand, Bill's dad, who sold insurance, found the boy uncommunicative and exasperatingly shy when he took him along on visits to clients. After the client had offered the usual "And what's your name, son?" Bill would answer with one word and fall silent. His father sometimes grew impatient with this trait, and it's still a trait that seems most curious in him today. He has a strong, obvious drive, yet he is anything but aggressive. His sense of humor is quick, easy and uncomplicated, yet he is very often quietly impassive. He wants to go, yet he goes in an unhurried way.

"Those days in the Army took a lot of the shyness out of me," Bill observes. "I got some self-confidence and I lost my embarrassment."

#### **Four Men Missing**

The fact is that Bill pretty nearly lost his life, too. He had raised his hand for the paratroopers (volunteers only) because the mud-slogging infantry seemed no more pleasant an alternative and because his father had died and the extra paratroopers' pay would help him support his mother. On D-day he had good reason to reconsider. He was part of the 101st Airborne Division, whose job it was to drop in 10 miles inland of the Normandy beachhead, where the landing boats were preparing to belch out the foot-soldiers. Shortly after midnight, his plane crippled, Bill and 21 buddies jumped. But when the group gathered on the ground, four men were missing; they had gone down with the plane.

At daybreak, Bill realized that many, many more men, in other invasion aircraft, had died, too. Between 800 and 900 were supposed to have met at the foot of a hill just before sunrise, and only 100

showed up. With a few stragglers, they succeeded for two weeks in holding off German reinforcements who were trying to get down to the invasion beach. Then the Allied troops moved up and took the paratroops out.

At the tail end of the war, when everyone was looking forward to quick discharges, Bill thought a lot about the service station in his future. Then the Germans crashed through the Ardennes Forest and touched off the Battle of the Bulge. Bill, who was stationed in Rheims, near Paris, was rushed to Bastogne with his division to help plug up holes in the line.

#### Bill Gets His

On the freezing-cold afternoon of January 2, 1945, his group had been cut off in a pocket of small villages in which GI's and Nazis were lobbing hand grenades at each other from across streets. Bill was assigned to carry a relief message out, but as he stumbled through the village a mortar shell suddenly blew up about 25 feet in front of him. When he regained consciousness some hours later he found he had been hit in his right arm, just above the elbow. He wandered around dazed until he was found by Allied troops.

During a five-month spell in Belgian and English hospitals one piece of shrapnel was removed from his arm, but another chunk, snuggled into a ticklish spot between a nerve and an artery, was

allowed to remain, presumably forever. Anyway, it's still there, and Bill has no plans for it.

He received his discharge in September, 1945, and was in the service station business two months later. All he had to his name was his \$300 mustering-out pay and a \$42 monthly disability pension, but when an acquaintance told him oil firms were looking for operators he approached Texaco. He was told there was a small Sunoco station in Dumont, New Jersey, which the owner had abandoned. Texaco had taken it over. Bill and a friend floated a \$1,500 GI loan between them to pay for stock and gasoline. Deliveries of gas were cash-on-the-barrel-head for beginners.

Then they opened up for business. "It was a real hole in the wall," Bill says. "There were two gas pumps, one grease bay and a tiny office. The whole thing had a rundown look and had been doing only 7,000 gallons a month. It was hidden by stores on both sides and drivers would be past before they even saw it."

#### More Hole than Wall

At the end of three weeks Bill's partner concluded that there was more hole than wall to this operation and pulled out. Bill took over their joint debts in return for his friend's share in the venture and they parted amicably. In another month his remaining capital had evaporated and so had most of his stock. He trudged around to

**On his day off, Bill turns to on his front lawn, with earnest help from his three-year-old twins.**





his suppliers—now his creditors—told them he was in business to stay and asked for credit.

"They gave it to me," he says. "Honest face, I guess."

A year later Bill had pushed the station's gallonage up to 10,000 a month, but at punishing physical cost. Since he had no employees, he worked seven days a week from 7:30 A.M. to 9:30 at night. The place had no wash bay so he scrubbed cars out in the open, summer and winter. At most only four cars could be squeezed in at one time, and he worked on the double to keep them moving. And since he had no one to relieve him he brought his lunch and ate it between chores. At night a youngster held the fort for 15 minutes while he ran up the block to a diner.

"The mistakes I made should have cost me my shirt," Bill says, "but I hadn't been around during the war and I didn't know that practically no station gave any free service. Not knowing any better, I worked like a horse and it made up for my ignorance."

The station left Bill little time for recreation, but he did meet a girl. He was 25 and she was 20. They were married. Five months later the girl, who hadn't really been prepared for the hours and days the station demanded, walked out. The next time Bill saw her in a lawyer's office. They were divorced. When he talks about it now Bill smiles—more in thanks than in humor. "The whole affair happened too fast. I was lucky it ended as simply as it did."

### It Began With a Laugh

Another girl lived in Dumont, too. Her name was Gladys and as she passed Bill's station every morning on her way to work he glanced away from his pumps at her. He watched for her in the evenings, too, but she never said anything. She was embarrassed and looked away. One hot summer day in 1947 she came by in shorts and Bill stared. Auburn-haired Gladys stared back this time. Suddenly Bill was drenched. The tank he was filling had drunk its limit and his non-automatic hose squirted him with gasoline from cap to shoes. As the driver protested that he wasn't going to pay for any such foolishness, and as Bill stood helpless and feeling as silly as he looked, Gladys howled with laughter. She broke down and started talking. A year and a half and many dates later, they were married.

Bill and his bride were not long for Dumont. Early in 1948 the owner of the property on which the station sat, talked about tearing it down. Bill, worried, told the Texas Company he didn't want to stay with this threat hanging over him. Texaco offered him a station in nearby Englewood that had been pumping only 8,000 gallons a month although it was five times larger than the one in Dumont.

Bill grabbed it. He sold out, got up \$3,000 for stock and equipment and moved in. Englewood

gave him three pumps, two bays and a 150-foot frontage against the 75 feet he had had in Dumont. Then he invited his brother-in-law, Paul Parano, to come in with him. This venture seemed big enough for two.

"Besides," Bill explains, "you've got to have some help and it's better, if possible, to have two fellows who both have a stake in the operation."

### The Big Chance

In 1951, after the partners had boosted the Englewood gallonage to 16,000, Texaco offered Bill a big, newly built station in New Milford. The operator had just died and it was wide open. Bill talked it over with Parano and finally decided it was time for him to expand. He also had in mind that he and Parano could save money by buying their stocks together. It cost Bill \$5,000 to get into New Milford and \$1,500 more for operating capital, but here the Texas Company helped out, since Parano couldn't pay cash for Bill's share of the Englewood station.

Today the new Milford dealership is Bill's own—or at least as much of it is as dealers ever really own in the complicated finance of service stations. Bill is what is known as a third-party dealer. This is by far the most common arrangement. The property on which his station sits is owned by a real estate investor, who leases it to the Texas Company. The company installed, owns and services the two lube and oil change lifts, the four gas pumps, the air compressor and the office equipment. Bill owns the rest, which includes:

A \$450 wheel balancer, \$1,600 worth of lubricating equipment, a \$100 tire-changer, a \$50 plug-cleaner and tester, a \$250 battery charger, the cash register, a filing cabinet, three jacks worth \$100, and \$4,000 worth of stock, exclusive of gas and oil. Oil costs Bill 20 cents a quart for Texaco and 25 cents for Havoline, a detergent lubricant. He sells about 2,000 quarts a month for 35 and 40 cents.

He has learned about sales psychology. A cardboard display of speedometer-cable lubricants gathered dust on his station wall for four months without attracting a customer to the three remaining tubes. One day Bill put up a fresh display containing a full complement of 12 tubes. They were gone in a week. If he puts a couple of two-gallon cans of Texaco's less expensive (mail-order competition) oil in his window, they sit. If he builds a pyramid with 20 cans, they sell fast. If he adds a sign that says, "Special," they sell even faster. Some of these tips came from the Texas Company's annual area schools for dealers. Bill is in his ninth year in the service-station business, and has attended nine of these sessions.

The first month after he took over at New Milford, though, he wasn't sure just what he was selling. He pumped 32,000 gallons of gas to his predecessor's 24,000, but made only as much money,



and there was no price war on. After a careful, quiet investigation, he found he was losing almost \$100 a week in stock and cash to sticky fingers. He had to fire two men, a task he found painful and upsetting.

He's had little trouble with this type of mishap since, but accidents have occurred. Once a vent line to one of his underground storage tanks broke and water seeped into the gas. Bill didn't find this out until the fourth water-logged customer had left, when the water showed up in the glass vial on the pump. He jumped into his pick-up truck and scoured the area, eventually finding the four cars stuck from two blocks to a mile away. He towed them back to the station, cleaned their lines out and gave them a fresh load of gas. Then he billed Texaco, since maintenance of the storage tanks is its responsibility. On days like that one, his hours are limitless.

Gladys was at first no more cheerful about Bill's hours than any bride would be, but she has since become reconciled to them. She is busy enough running their River Vale home and their three-year-old, look-alike twins. The boys are so similar that when Bill and Gladys can't see their faces (Steven's is round, like Gladys'), they identify them by voice differences. Robert's is deeper and gruffer. The twins were born a month and a half prematurely, and when their weight dropped to less than five pounds soon after birth they were placed in incubators for their first month.

Last June, Sharon arrived, weighing in at a comfortable seven pounds, 14 ounces. When a woman drove into the station a week later and asked Bill whether it had been a boy or a girl, he said, "A girl, of course."

"What do you mean, 'of course'?" the woman asked. "How did you know?"

"I didn't," Bill replied, "but Gladys did. I told her that if it wasn't I'd send her right back there next year." Then he looked embarrassed.

### One Family Hurdle

Bill and Gladys had one fairly serious hurdle to get over. It was religion, and they talked it out and came to an understanding. Bill is a Catholic and Gladys is an Episcopalian. He feels that all children should go to some church and believe in God. He also feels that since a mother spends more time raising the children than does a father, they should be introduced to her religion. Therefore, when Steven and Robert are older Gladys will take them to Episcopal Sunday school. If she doesn't, Bill will take them to a Catholic school. In that event he will have to re-establish the relations he ruptured with his Church when he was divorced.

But that problem is not immediate. Right now Bill's major concern is the effect of the price war on the \$13,000 mortgage on his home. He's not deeply worried, but he would hate to see any-

thing happen to it. It's a pretty \$23,000 house, with three bedrooms and a large L-shaped dining and living room, a roomy kitchen, two bathrooms, and a full cellar. The exterior of the back of the house is knotty-pined, the rest slate-gray cedar shingles and brick, and all topped by a powder-blue roof. His land runs 150 feet wide and, surprisingly these days, 400 feet deep. It backs up against untouched forest, and on many an early morning Bill has gone out to his truck and found a deer sniffing one of his tires. He has ambitious post-price-war plans for this spacious back end, including a swimming pool and a barbecue pit.

But until the heavy, more costly work can begin on these projects, Bill is content to dig a little on one Sunday afternoon, knock a tree out of the way of the future barbecue pit on another. Since he finds relaxation in keeping his hands busy, he devotes what time he can find to home repairs, such as finishing the rough basement—little by little—and repainting a room whose colors Gladys has decided to change again. Also moving at an unhurried but steady pace is the beginning of a basement workshop.

### A Reasonable Wife

With his long hours at the station, Bill is left with small opportunity to do things with his family away from the house. But Gladys is completely reasonable about this. She seems just as intent on the future as he is, and just as willing, too, to wait for it. The children are still so young that whatever can be done with them can be done anywhere.

"We have it figured," Bill says, "that we're going to go on for a good while in just about this same way. There's still a lot to do. Before it's all done the kids will have grown up. When they do, I'll take 'em down to the station a few times. If they like it they can have the business. If they don't want it, O.K. If they want to go to college, that's fine; if they don't, that's fine, too. It'll be up to them. All you can do is point them right. Anyway, that all comes later, so we're not in any kind of a rush."

Then Bill gazes thoughtfully back into the forest, the same way he gazes out of his station window.

Little things Bill says tab him as a man who is still just enough unsure of himself to make haste slowly. He is articulate, but seems careful to be a good listener. Perhaps this is because, as he says, "I'd like to learn to express myself better. Some day I'm going to take one of those Dale Carnegie courses and get a little more polish. A man who can make himself well understood is going places. That counts for a lot."

This yearning may also explain Bill's statement that, though he adores his wife and children, on Monday mornings "I like to go to work. I just like to."

—BY HAROLD MEHLING

# Angler's Almanac

By Robert C. McCormick



## THIS MONTH'S STAR:

**Florida Largemouth**—Distinct subspecies of largemouth black bass found only in Florida, running to huge size and often called trout in some sections of state.

**MARKINGS:** Despite relationship to northern largemouth, Florida breed has the exceptionally high scale-count of the smallmouth bass (69-73 on lateral line). Coloration same as in largemouth (green to greenish-white) with wide dark lateral band along sides. Major distinguishing characteristic from other bass also found in Florida (Kentucky, Suwannee and the northern largemouth) is its size—8-15 pounds average, 20 pounds maximum.

**HABITAT:** Florida largemouth likes same kind of waters as do largemouths everywhere—shallow coves in slow-moving rivers and lakes. But easiest place to find even the biggest largemouth is in practically any roadside canal or drainage ditch of a size used elsewhere only for irrigation or sewage. Fact is, you can practically jump across some of finest largemouth canals in the state. Fishermen have been known to park their cars along roadside, sit on fender and tie into an 8- or 9 pounder on very first cast. During rainy seasons, high water sometimes pushes out over neighboring farm lands. Bass follow to feed, may be caught then by wading in fields much as you would in trout streams up north. For more conventional sport, though, Florida anglers concentrate on practically any one of state's fantastic total of 30,000 lakes, plus such justly famous bass rivers as the sprawling St. John's, the Oklawaha, Withlacoochee, Myakka, Kissimmee, Apalachicola and the like, plus their countless smaller tributaries, interlacing

creeks, and even hidden bass-ponds inside swampy Everglades. Fact is, in Florida you can find out where bass live simply by stopping in at nearest bait-and-tackle shop.

**HOW TO CATCH:** Fish are taken by all time-tested methods used on black bass everywhere (fly fishing, plug casting, bass bugging, still-fishing with live bait). However, more Florida bassmen seek quarry on top-water lures (both plugs and bugs) than anywhere else inland. An 8- to 15-pound largemouth, exploding from beneath the water in heavy burst of spray as he nails top-running plug, is one of the greatest thrills in freshwater angling anywhere. Other anglers prefer standard underwater spoons (sometimes baited with trailing pork rind), wigglers, spinners, dancers and divers, especially during heat of the day when fish tend to seek out deepest, coolest holes in either lake or stream.

As with other bass, Florida largemouth builds its spawning nest in shallows, but there similarity ends. Though most largemouth spawn in springtime, some have been known to beget offspring in some Florida waters practically every month of the year. More often than not, Papa Bass turns cannibalistic and eats his own young once they're of a size to fend for themselves. Therefore, most authorities regard stripping a bass nest of the male parent guarding it as the best possible conservation practice.

# January Hotspots

**Northeast:** Despite freezing weather, fish still have to eat. Trick now is to try 'em through the ice; fish themselves (hungry pickerel, walleyes, pike, whitefish, smelt, crappies, yellow perch and lake trout where legal) will be fatter and tastier now than at any time of the year, albeit just as sporting to catch. What's more, a day in the crisp, cold air tending tip-ups on a frozen lake is just what the doctor ordered for lungs long-filled with the fumes of big-city living. This can be had practically anywhere there's ice strong enough to hold you, and your simple and inexpensive equipment.

Ice-angling methods vary in popularity almost from lake to lake—from jiggling small wobbling spoons on the end of handlines to snatching perch on tiny hooks baited with the eyes of other perch. But the most conventional method is through use of the traditional tip-up—a line-holding contraption equipped with red flag to signal when a fish is hooked. You can buy them at any tackle store or, for as little as a buck apiece—most states permit the use of five at a time,

but better check locally. Or if you've an inventive turn of mind you can make one. Simply wind the reel with about 40 feet of 27-pound test surplus line, tie a snelled No. 6 (or larger) hook directly to the end for your bait, and you can handle the biggest pickerel, walleye or northern pike. A bucket of minnows, plus an ice-chisel, and you're set.

Just a word of caution: *never* use an axe for chopping holes through ice. They're not made for the job, and easily can slip from your hands and cause painful accident. Use instead a heavy carpenter's chisel, welded to a 4- or 5-foot section of one-inch pipe weighted with lead and equipped with a loop of rope to prevent its slipping from your hands.

And, for best fishing grounds, check in at any bait-and-tackle shop in ice-fishing states and go where the man says. Surprisingly, some such shops do a bigger business in live-bait in winters than in hot summer months. They must know all about current ice conditions and local hot spots, to stay in business.

**South:** While adequate mention of way to good bass-fishing in fantastic Florida is made under "This Month's Star" on opposite page, don't forget there are other prize gamsters in the state. Many of them can be caught in the most unexpected places. You shouldn't be surprised, for example, if you suddenly hang a good-sized snook or baby tarpon, plus a barracuda or two, while bass fishing any of the state's plethora of ship canals. Best bets: any waterway along famed Tamiami Trail (Route 41) between Miami and St. Petersburg, plus Miami's North River, Hillsborough, West Palm Beach canals along Florida east coast. If you're from out-of-state, naturally you'll also want to try some of the excellent inshore angling for salt-water species around Miami, Palm Beach, Stuart, Ft. Pierce in the east, plus Fort Meyers, Punta Gorda, Tampa-St. Petersburg on the west.

But for the offshore sportsman, now's the time to go after sailfish off Florida's East Coast. If you concentrate on Gulf Stream off the Palm Beaches, you can compete in the annual

Silver Sailfish Derby for which West Palm Beach is justly famous. Competition runs from mid-month to mid-February, and every angler releasing a sailfish hooked in area is awarded an individual, inscribed trophy as keepsake. Idea is to conserve sailfish population for future since leaping sails are great sport to catch, not worth a tinker's dam as food, and anything less than seven feet in length is scarcely worth mounting anyway. Check in at West Palm Beach Fishing Club on arrival and they'll handle all arrangements informing you of the very wide variety of fishing available in area.

If, however, it's still Florida bassing you want, now's the time to try inside the famed Everglades, especially if water table is low. Drive down state highway No. 7 out of West Palm Beach to place called, adequately enough, "Sportsman's Paradise." You'll be in for once-in-a-lifetime thrill of fishing for bass inside the Glades from amazing airboats driven by airplane motors and pusher-type propellers. Cost: \$25 a day in season, and worth it.

**Middle America:** If you're resident of northern third of Middle America, see the "how" of ice-fishing under North-eastern Hotspots in this edition of Angler's Almanac, check your own state's laws, and apply same idea to your own waters.

Elsewhere, season's always open on any fish that swims in Ohio, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana, and in all impounded waters in Missouri. Naturally, angling gets better (and warmer) the farther south you go during January. Good places to head for now are any of the various oxbow lakes along the Mississippi River in eastern Arkansas. Here largemouth bass to 10 pounds, crappies and bluegills between 2 and 4 pounds are distinct possibilities. Best bets: Lake Chico near town of Lake Village in south-eastern Arkansas, Horseshoe Lake near town of Hughes, plus any one of the 150 smaller natural and/or man-made lakes and ponds inside the 120,000-acre White River Game Preserve near St. Charles; latter is unexcelled back-country

angling, and if weather permits easy access you'll be in some of the best bass waters in entire state.

Farther north, fishing still should be excellent (and the weather bearable) in Missouri's bootheel waters (see December BLUEBOOK), plus Clearwater Lake, a fairly new reservoir just north of Poplar Bluff. To the south and east, Louisiana's False River Lake near St. Francisville and Lake Bistineau are two of that state's most productive bass waters. Mississippi's Arkabutia, Enid and Sardis Reservoirs also rank with the best January bets in the mid-South. For saltwater species, you'd best fish inshore now, in bayous and brackish waters of streams flowing into Gulf, since speckled sea trout, croakers, sheepshead, channel bass, etc. all will be inland preparatory to returning to Gulf of Mexico next month to spawn. Result is that entire, grossly under-promoted Mississippi River Delta country below New Orleans should be better now for more different species (including fresh water bass) than at any time of the year.

**Pacific Coast:** Winter-run steelhead continues to be the sport on West Coast throughout January (see December BLUEBOOK) and practically any stream will produce fish. Yet New Year's Day brings something new to angling world in midst of snow-capped Rockies farther inland: wintertime angling for Rocky Mountain Whitefish in designated streams of most northern Rocky Mountain states. One of best areas is in Island Park country of Idaho where season on Salmon River's North Fork opens January 1, ends two months later. Fish, generally are taken on white maggots impaled on tiny size 12 hooks, but there are some who swear by dry-fly fishing. For info on open streams, check authorities in states of Washington, Wyoming, Montana, Colorado in addition to Idaho.

If, however, the possibility of tangling with a Rocky Mountain blizzard scares you, you can still get some pretty good trout fishing in some of the southern Pacific Coastal states. Season's open in Arizona and in parts of New Mexico. Best bet is the series of drainage ditches on both sides

of the Rio Grande between Bernillo and Belen, New Mexico. For a distance of 40 miles only a stone's throw from Albuquerque, you'll be able to find hitherto unsuspected mid-winter trouting that ranks with the best anywhere. New Mexico's Department of Game and Fish keeps cold-water ditches well stocked with legal rainbows and browns during months when roads to higher mountain streams are nearly impassable. The fish are tough to catch in clear water.

Best warm-water fishing in Far West during month usually is found in any of the Colorado River Reservoirs along California-Arizona border from sprawling Lake Mead down through Lake Mohave, Lake Havasu and the Martinez-Ferguson Lakes near Mexican border. If bass aren't hitting when you're there, switch to dry flies for panfish and you'll have a circus. Winter visitors to Phoenix or Tucson could do worse during month than to try Canyon, Apache and Stewart Mountain Lakes for bass, crappies, and good-sized catfish. Bartlett Lake and Lake Pleasant are good now too.



# *The* Past Master

BY ROBERT BLOCH

*The tall man with the hypnotic stare came out of the sea carrying six million in cash. Only four people could furnish clues to his mysterious behavior. Here are their stories.*

*Statement of Dorothy Lavitzky*

HONESTLY, I could just *die*. The way George acts, you'd think it was *my* fault or something. You'd think he never even *saw* the guy. You'd think I stole his car. And he keeps asking me to *explain* everything to him. If I told him once, I told him a hundred times—and the cops too. Besides, what's there to *tell* him? He was there.

Of *course* it doesn't make sense. I already know that. Honest to Pete, I wish I'd stayed home Sunday. I wish I'd told George I had another date when he called up. I wish I'd made him take me to the show instead of that old beach. Him and his convertible! Besides, your legs stick to those leather seats in hot weather.

But you should've seen me Sunday when he called. You'd think he was taking me to *Florida*



or someplace, the way I acted. I had this new slack suit I bought at Sterns, with the plaid top, sort of a halter, like. And I quick put on some more of that Restora Rinse. You know, George is the one down at the office who started everybody calling me "Blondie."

So anyhow he came around and picked me up about four, and it was still hot and he had the top down. I guess he just finished washing the car. It

looked real snazzy, and he said, "Boy, it just matches your hair, don't it?"

First we drove along the Parkway and then out over the Drive. It was just *poked*, the cars, I mean. So he said how about it if we didn't go to the beach until after dinner.

That was all right by me, so we went to this Luigi's—it's a seafood place way south on the highway. It's real expensive and they got one of those





big menus with all kinds of ozy stuff like pompanos and terrapins. That's a turtle, like.

I had a sirloin and French fries, and George had—I can't remember, oh, yes I do—he had fried chicken. Before we ate we had a couple drinks, and after we just sat in the booth and had a couple more. We were sort of kidding back and forth, you know, about the beach and all, and waiting until after dark so we could go swimming on account of not bringing any suits.

Anyways, I was kidding. That George, *he* just as soon do anything. And don't think I didn't *know* why he was feeding me all those drinks. When we went out he stopped over at the bar and picked up a pint.

The moon was just coming up, almost full, and we started singing while we drove, and I felt like I was getting right with it. So when he said let's not go to the regular beach—he knew this little place way off somewhere—I thought, why not?

It was like a bay, sort of, and you could park up on the bluff along this side road, and then walk down to the sand and see way out across the water.

Only that's not why George picked it. He wasn't interested in looking at water. First thing he did was to spread out this big beach blanket, and the second thing he did was open up his pint, and the third thing he did was to start monkeying around.

Nothing serious, you understand, just monkey-

ing around, kind of. Well, he's not so bad-looking, even with that busted nose of his, and we kept working on that pint, and it was kind of romantic. I mean, the moon and all.

It wasn't until he really began *messing* that I made him stop. And even then, I practically had to *sork* him one before he figured out I wasn't kidding.

"Cut it out," I said. "Now see what you've done! You tore my halter."

"Hell, I'll buy you a new one," he said. "Come on, baby." He tried to grab me again, and I gave him a good one, right on the side of his head. For a minute I thought he'd—you know—get tough about it. But he was pretty canned up, I guess. Anyhow, he just started blubbering. About how sorry he was, and that he knew I wasn't that kind, but it was just that he was so crazy about me.

I almost had to laugh, they're so funny when they get that way. But I figured it was smarter to put on an act, so I made out like I was real sore, like I'd never been so insulted in all my life.

Then he said we should have another drink and forget about it, only the pint was empty. So he said how about him taking a run up to the road and getting some more? Or we could both go to a tavern if I liked.

"With all these *marks* on my neck?" I told him. "I certainly will not! If you want more, *you* get it."

So he said he would, and he'd be back in five minutes. And he went.

Anyhow, that's how I was alone, when it happened. I was just sitting there on the blanket, looking out at the water, when I saw this thing sort of moving. At first it looked sort of like a log or something. But it kept coming closer, and then I could see it was somebody swimming, real fast.

So I kept on watching, and pretty soon I made out it was a man, and he was heading right for shore. Then he got close enough so's I could see him stand up and start wading in. He was real tall, *real* tall, like one of those basketball players, only not skinny or anything. And so help me he didn't have any trunks on or anything. Not a *stitch*!

Well, I mean, what could I do? I figured he didn't see me, and besides, you can't go running around screaming your head off. Not that there was anyone to hear me. I was all alone there. So I just sat and waited for him to come out of the water and go away up the beach or someplace.

Only he didn't go away. He came out and he walked right over to me. You can *imagine*—there I was, sitting, and there *he* was, all dripping wet and with no clothes. But he gave me a big hello, just like nothing was wrong. He looked real dreamy when he smiled.

"Good evening," he said. "Might I inquire my whereabouts, Miss?"



*Dig* that "whereabouts" talk!

So I told him where he was, and he nodded, and then he saw how I was staring and he said, "Might I trouble you for the loan of that blanket?"

Well, what else could I do? I got up and gave it to him and he wrapped it around his waist. That's the first I noticed he was carrying this bag in his hand. It was some kind of plastic, and you couldn't tell what was inside of it.

"What happened to your trunks?" I asked him.

"Trunks?" You'd of thought he never heard of such things the way he said it. Then he smiled again and said, "I'm sorry. They must have slipped off."

"Where'd you start from?" I asked. "You got a boat out there?" He was real tan, he looked like one of these guys that hang around the Yacht Basin all the time.

"Yes. How did you know?" he said.

"Well, where else would you come from?" I told him. "It just stands to reason."

"It does, at that," he said.

I looked at the bag. "What you got in there?" I asked.

He opened his mouth to answer me, but he never got a chance. Because all of a sudden George came running down from the bluff. I never even seen his lights or heard the car stop. But there he was, just *tearing* down, with a bottle in his hand, all ready to swing. *Character!*

"What the hell's going on here?" he yelled.

"Nothing," I told him.

"Who the hell is this guy? Where'd he come from?" George shouted.

"Permit me to introduce myself," the guy said.

"My name is John Smith and—"

"John Smith my foot!" yelled George, only he didn't say "foot." He was real mad. "All right, let's have it. What's the big idea, you two?"

"There isn't any big idea," I said. "This man was swimming and he lost his trunks, so he borrowed the blanket. He's got a boat out there and—"

"Where? Where's the boat? I don't see any boat." Neither did I, come to think of it. George wasn't waiting for any answers, though. "You there, gimme back that blanket and get the hell out of here."

"He can't," I told him. "He hasn't got any trunks on."

George stood there with his mouth open. Then he waved the bottle. "All right, then, fella. You're coming with us." He gave me a wise look. "Know what I think? I think this guy's a phony. He could even be one of those spies the Russians are sending over in submarines."

That's George for you. Ever since the papers got full of this war scare, he's been seeing Communists all over the place.

"Start talking," he said. "What's in that bag?"

The guy just looked at him and smiled.

"Okay, so you want to do it the hard way, it's okay by me. Get up that bluff, fella. We're gonna take a ride over to the police. Come on, before I let you have it." And he waved the bottle.

The guy sort of shrugged and then he looked at George. "You have an automobile?" he asked.

"Of course, what do I look like, Paul Revere or something?" George said.

"Paul Revere? Is he alive?" The guy was kidding, but George didn't know it.

"Shut up and get moving," he said. "The car's right up there."

THE guy looked up at the car. Then he nodded to himself and he looked at George.

That's all he did. So help me. He just *looked* at him.

He didn't make any of those funny passes with his hands, and he didn't say anything. He just *looked*, and he kept right on smiling. His face didn't change a bit.

But George—his face changed. It just sort of set, like it was frozen stiff. And so did everything. I mean, his hands got numb and the bottle fell and busted. George was like he couldn't move.

I opened my mouth but the guy kind of glanced over at me and I thought maybe I'd better not say anything. All of a sudden I felt cold all over, and I didn't know *what* would happen if he looked at me.

So I stood there, and then this guy went up to George and undressed him. Only it wasn't exactly undressing him, because George was just like one of those window dummies you see in the stores. Then the guy put all of George's clothes on himself, and he put the blanket around George. I could see he had this plastic bag in one hand and George's car keys in the other.

I was going to scream, only the guy looked at me again and I couldn't. I didn't feel stiff like George, or paralyzed, or anything like that. But I couldn't scream to save my neck. And what good would it of done anyhow?

Because this guy just walked right up the side of the bluff and climbed in George's car and drove away. He never said a word, he never looked back. He just went.

Then I could scream, but good. I was still screaming when George came out of it, and I thought he'd have a hemorrhage or something.

Well, we had to walk back *all* the way. It was over three miles to the highway patrol, and they made me tell the whole thing over and over again a dozen times. They got George's license number and they're still looking for the car. And this ser-

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Illustrated by ED VEBELL

gent, he thinks George is maybe right about the Communists.

Only he didn't see the way the guy looked at George. Every time I think about it, I could just die!

### Statement of Milo Fabian

I SCARCELY GOT the drapes pulled when he walked in. Of course, at first I thought he was delivering something. He wore a pair of those atrocious olive-drab slacks and a ready-made sports jacket, and he had on one of those caps that look a little like those worn by jockeys.

"Well, what is it?" I said. I'm afraid I was just a wee bit rude about it—truth to tell, I'd been in a perfectly filthy mood ever since Jerry told me he was running up to Cape Cod for the exhibit. You'd think he might at least have considered my feelings and invited me to go along. But no, I had to stay behind and keep the gallery open.

But I actually had no excuse for being spiteful to this stranger. I mean, he was rather an attractive sort of person when he took that idiotic cap off. He had black, curly hair and he was quite tall, really immense: I was almost afraid of him until he smiled.

"Mr. Warlock?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"This is the Warlock Gallery, isn't it?"

"Yes. But Mr. Warlock is out of the city. I'm Mr. Fabian. Can I help you?"

"It's rather a delicate matter."

"If you have something to sell, you can show me. I do all the buying for the Gallery."

"I've nothing to sell. I want to purchase some paintings."

"Well, in that case, won't you come right back with me, Mr. —"

"Smith," he said.

We started down the aisle together. "Could you tell me just what you had in mind?" I asked. "As you probably know, we tend to specialize in moderns. We have a very good Kandinsky now, and an early Mondrian—"

"You don't have the pictures I want here," he said. "I'm sure of it."

We were already in the gallery. I stopped. "Then what was it you wished?"

He stood there, swinging this perfectly enormous plastic pouch. "You mean what kind of paintings? Well, I want one or two good Rembrandts, a Vermeer, a Raphael, something by Titian, a van Gogh, a Tintoretto. Also a Goya, an El Greco, a Brueghel, a Hals, a Holbein, a Gauguin. I don't suppose there's a way of getting *The Last Supper*—that was done as a fresco, wasn't it?"

It was positively weird to hear the man. I'm afraid I was definitely piqued, and I showed it. "Please!" I said. "I happen to be busy this morning. I have no time to—"

"You don't understand," he answered. "You buy pictures, don't you? Well, I want you to buy me some. As my—my agent, that's the word, isn't it?"

"That's the word," I told him. "But surely you can't be serious. Have you any idea of the cost involved in acquiring such a collection? It would be simply fabulous."

"I've got money," he said. We were standing next to the deal table at the entrance, and he walked over to it and put his pouch down. Then he zipped it open.

I have never, but simply never, seen such a fantastic sight in my life. That pouch was full of bills, stack after stack of bills, and every single one was either a five- or a 10-thousand dollar denomination. I mean it; he had this huge pouch filled with five- and 10-thousand dollar bills. Why, I'd never even seen one before!

If he'd been carrying twenties or hundreds, I might have suspected counterfeits, but nobody would have the audacity to dream of getting away with a stunt like this. They looked genuine, and they were. I know, because—but that's for later.

So there I stood, looking at this utterly mad heap of money lying there, and this Mr. Smith, as he called himself, said, "Well, do you think I have enough?"

I COULD have just passed out, thinking about it. Imagine, a perfect stranger, walking in off the street with 10 million dollars to buy paintings. And my share of the commission is five percent!

"I don't know," I said. "You're really serious about all this?"

"Here's the money. How soon can you get me what I want?"

"Please," I said. "This is all so unusual, I hardly know where to begin. Do you have a definite list of what you wish to acquire?"

"I can write the names down for you," he told me. "I remember most of them."

He knew what he wanted, I must say. Velázquez, Gorgione, Cézanne, Degas, Utrillo, Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Delacroix, Ryder, Pissarro—

Then he began writing titles. I'm afraid I gasped. "Really," I said. "You can't actually expect to buy the Mona Lisa!"

"Why not?" He looked perfectly serious.

"It's not for sale at any price, you know."

"I didn't know. Who owns it?"

"The Louvre. In Paris."

"I didn't know." He was serious, I'd swear he was. "But what about the rest?"

"I'm afraid many of these paintings are in the same category. They're not for sale. Most of them are in public galleries and museums here and abroad. And a number of the particular works you request are in the hands of private collectors who could never be persuaded to sell."

He stood up and began scooping the money back into his pouch. I took his arm.

"But we can certainly do our best," I said. "We have our sources, our connections. I'm sure we can at least procure some of the lesser, representative pieces by every one of the masters you list. It's merely a matter of time."

He shook his head. "Won't do. This is Tuesday, isn't it? I've got to have everything by Sunday night."

Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous in all your life? The man was stark staring.

"Look," he said. "I'm beginning to understand how things are, now. These paintings I want, they're scattered all over the world. Owned by public museums and private parties who won't sell. And I suppose the same thing is true of manuscripts. Things like the Gutenberg Bible. Shakespeare first folios. The Declaration of Independence—"

Stark staring. I didn't trust myself to do anything but nod at him.

"How many of the things I want are here?" he asked. "Here, in this country?"

"A fair percentage, well over half."

"All right. Here's what you do. Sit down over there and make me up a list. I want you to write me down the names of the paintings I've noted, and just where they are. I'll give you \$10,000 for the list."

Ten thousand dollars for a list he could have acquired free of charge at the public library! Ten thousand dollars for less than an hour's work!

I gave him his list. And he gave me the money and walked out with the list.

By this time I was just about frantic. I mean, it was all so *shattering*. He came and he went, and there I stood—not knowing his real name, or anything. Talk about your eccentric millionaires! He went, and there I stood with \$10,000 in my hand.

Well, I'm not one to do anything rash. He hadn't been gone three minutes before I locked up and stepped over to the bank. I simply *hopped* all the way back to the gallery.

Then I said to myself, "What for?"

I didn't have to go back now, really. This was

**my money, not Jerry's.** I'd earned it all by my little self. And as for him, he could stay up at the Cape and rot. I didn't need his precious job.

I went right down and bought a ticket to Paris. All this war-scare talk is simply a lot of fluff, if you ask me. Sheer fluff.

Of course Jerry is going to be utterly furious when he hears about it. Well, let him. All I have to say is, he can get himself another boy.

*Statement of Nick Krauss*

**I** WAS DEAD on my feet. I'd been on the job ever since Tuesday night and here it was Saturday. Talk about living on your nerves!

But I wasn't missing out on this deal, not me. Because this was the pay-off. The pay-off to the biggest caper that was ever rigged.

Sure, I heard of the Brink's job. I even got a pretty good idea who was in on it. But that was peanuts, and it took better'n a year to set up.

This deal topped 'em all. Figure it for yourself, once. Six million bucks, cash. In four days. Get that, now. I said six million bucks in four days. That's all, brother!

And who did it? Me, that's who.

Let me tell you one thing: I earned that dough. Every lousy cent of it. And don't think I didn't have to shell out plenty in splits. Right now I can't even remember just how many was in on it from beginning to end. But what with splits and expenses—like hiring all them planes to fly the stuff down—I guess it cost pretty near a million and a half, just to swing it.

That left four and a half million. Four and a half million—and me going down to the yacht to collect.

I had the whole damn haul right in the truck. A hundred and forty pieces, some of 'em plenty heavy, too. But I wasn't letting nobody else horse around with unloading. This was dynamite. Only two miles from the warehouse where I got everything assembled. Longest two miles I ever drove.

Sure, I had a warehouse. What the hell, I *bought* the thing! Bought the yacht for him, too. Paid cash. When you got six million in cash to

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play with, you don't take no chances on something you can just as well buy without no trouble.

Plenty of chances the way it was. Had to take chances, working that fast. Beat me how I managed to get through the deal without a dozen leaks.

But the dough helped. You take a guy, he'll rat on you for two-three grand. Give him 20 or 30, and he's yours. I'm not just talking syndicate, either. Because there was plenty guys in on it that weren't even in no mob—guys that never been mugged except maybe for these here college annual books where they show pictures of all the professors. I paid off guards and I paid off coppers and I paid off a bunch of curators, too. Not characters, curators. Guys that run museums.

I still don't know what this joker wanted with all that stuff. Only thing I can figure is maybe he was one of these here Indian rajahs or something. But he didn't look like no Hindu—he was a big, tall, youngish guy. Didn't talk like one, either. But who else wants to lay out all that lettuce for a bunch of dizzy paintings and stuff?

**A**NYWAYS, he showed up Tuesday night with this pouch of his. How he got to me, how he ever got by Lefty downstairs I never figured out.

But there he was. He asked me if it was true, what he heard about me, and he asked me if I wanted to do a job. Said his name was Smith. You know the kind of con you get when they want to stay dummied up on you.

I didn't care if he dummied up or not. Because, like the fella says, money talks. And it sure hollered Tuesday night. He opens this pouch of his and spills two million bucks on the table.

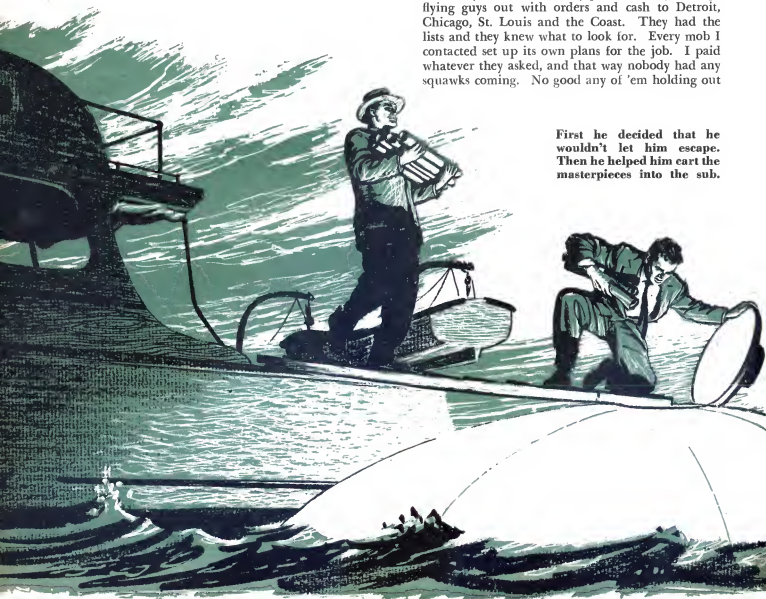
So help me, two million bucks! Cash!

"I've brought this along for expenses," he said. "There's four million more in it if you can co-operate."

Let's skip the rest of it. We made a deal, and I went to work. Wednesday I had him on that yacht, and he stayed there all the way through. Every night I went down and reported.

I went to Washington myself and handled the New York and Philadelphia end, too. Also Boston, on Friday. The rest was by phone, mostly. I kept flying guys out with orders and cash to Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis and the Coast. They had the lists and they knew what to look for. Every mob I contacted set up its own plans for the job. I paid whatever they asked, and that way nobody had any squawks coming. No good any of 'em holding out

First he decided that he wouldn't let him escape. Then he helped him cart the masterpieces into the sub.



on me—where could they sell the stuff? Those things are too hot.

By the time Thursday come around, I was up to my damn neck in diagrams and room plans and getaway routes. There was six guys just checking on alarm systems and stuff in the joints I was supposed to cover. We had maybe 50 working in New York, not counting from the inside. You wouldn't believe it if I told you some of the guys who helped. Big professors and all, tipping us off on how to make a heist, or cutting wires and leaving doors unlocked. I hear a dozen up and lammed after it was over. That's what *real* dough can buy you.

Of course I run into trouble. Lots of it. We never did get a haul out of L.A. The fix wasn't in the way it was supposed to be, and they lost the whole load trying for a getaway at the airport. Lucky thing the cops shot up all four of the guys, the ones who made the haul. So they couldn't trace anything.

All told, must of been seven or eight cashed in; the four in L.A., two in Philly, one guy in Detroit and one in Chicago. But no leaks. I kept the wires open, and I had my people out there, sort of supervising. Every bit of the stuff we did get came in by private plane, over in Jersey. Went right to the warehouse.

And I had the whole works, 143 pieces, on the truck when I went down for the pay-off.

It took me three hours to cart that stuff onto the yacht. This guy, this Mr. Smith, he just sat and watched the whole time.

When I was done I said, "That's the works. You satisfied now or do you want a receipt?"

He didn't smile or anything. Just shook his head. "You'll have to open them up," he said.

"Open 'em up? That'll take another couple hours," I told him.

"We've got time," he said.

"Hell we have! Mister, this stuff's hot and I'm hotter. There's maybe a hundred thousand honest Johns looking for the loot—ain't you read the papers or heard the radio? Whole damn country's in an uproar. Worse than the war crisis or whatever you call it. I want out of here, fast."

**B**UT he wanted them crates and boxes open, so I opened 'em. What the hell, for four million bucks, a little flunkie work don't hurt. Not even when you're dead for sleep. It was a tough job, though, because everything was packed nice. So as not to have any damage, that is.

Nothing was in frames. He had these canvases and stuff all over the floor, and he checked them off in a notebook, every one. And when I got the last damn picture out and hauled all the wood and junk up on deck and put it over the side in the dark, I come back to find him in the forward cabin.

"What's the pitch?" I asked. "Where you going?"

"To transfer these to my ship," he told me. "After all, you didn't expect I'd merely sail off in this vessel, did you? And I'll need your assistance to get them on board. Don't worry, it's only a short distance away."

He started the engines. I came right up behind him and stuck my Special in his ribs.

"Where's the bundle?" I asked.

"In the other cabin, on the table." He didn't even look around.

"You're not pulling anything, are you?"

"See for yourself."

I went to see. And he was leveling.

Four million bucks on the table. Five- and 10-thousand-dollar bills, and no phony geetus either. Wouldn't be too damn easy passing this stuff—the Feds would have the word out about big bills—but then, I didn't count on sticking around with the loot. There's plenty countries where they like them big bills and don't ask any questions. South America, such places. That part didn't worry me too much, as long as I knew I'd get there.

And I figured on getting there all right. I went back to the other cabin and showed him my Special again. "Keep going," I said. "I'll help you, but the first time you get cute I'm set to remove your appendix with a slug."

He knew who I was. He knew I could just let him have it and skid out of there any time I wanted. But he never even blinked at me—just kept right on steering.

We must of gone about four-five miles. It was pitch dark and he didn't carry any spot, but he knew where he was going. Because all at once we stopped and he said, "Here we are."

**I** WENT up on deck with him and I couldn't see nothing. Just the lights off on shore and the water all around. I sure as hell didn't see no boat anywheres.

"Where is it?" I asked him.

"Where is what?"

"Your boat?"

"Down there." He pointed over the side.

"What the hell you got, a submarine or something?"

"Something." He leaned over the side. His hands was empty, he didn't do anything but lean. And so help me, all of a sudden up comes this damn thing. Like a big round silver ball, sort of, with a lid on top.

I didn't even notice the lid until it opened up. And it floated alongside, so's he could run the gangplank out to rest on the lid.

"Come on," he said. "I'll help you. It won't take long this way."

"You think I'm gonna carry stuff across that lousy plank?" I asked him. "In the dark?"

"Don't worry, you can't fall. It's magno-meshed."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"I'll show you."

He walked across that plank and climbed right down into the thing before I thought to try and stop him. The plank never moved an inch.

Then he was back out. "Come on, there's nothing to be afraid of."

"Who's afraid?"

**B**UT I was scared, plenty. Because now I knew what he was. I'd been reading the papers a lot these days, and I didn't miss none of the war talk. Them Commies with all their new weapons and stuff—well, this was one of them. It is no wonder he was tossing around millions of bucks like that.

So I figured ~~on~~ doing my patriotic duty. Sure, I'd haul his lousy pictures on board for him. I wanted to get a look inside that sub of his. But when I finished, I made up my mind he wasn't gonna streak out for Russia or someplace. I'd get him first.

That's the way I played it. I helped him cart the whole mess down into the sub.

Then I changed my mind again. He wasn't no Russian. He wasn't anything I ever heard of except an inventor, maybe. Because that thing he had was crazy.

It was all hollow inside. All hollow, with just a thin wall around. I could tell there wasn't space for an engine or anything. Just enough room to stack the stuff and leave space for maybe two or three guys to stand.

There wasn't any electric light in the place either, but it was light. And *daylight*. I know what I'm talking about—I know about neon and fluorescent lights too. This was something else. Something new.

Instruments? Well, he had some kind of little slots on one part, but they was down on the floor. You had to lay down next to them to see how they'd work. And he kept watching me, so I didn't want to take a chance on acting too nosy. I figured it wasn't healthy.

I was scared because he *wasn't* scared.

I was scared because he *wasn't* no Russian.

I was scared because there ain't any round balls that float in water, or come up from under water when you just look at 'em. And because he come from nowhere with his cash and he was going nowhere with the pictures. Nothing made any sense any more, except one thing. I wanted out. I wanted out bad.

Maybe you think I'm nuts, but that's because you never was inside a shiny ball floating in water, only not bobbing around or even moving when the waves hit it, and all daylight with nothing to light it with. You never saw this Mr. Smith who wasn't named Smith and maybe not even Mr.

But if you had, you would of understood why

I was so glad to get back on that yacht and go down in the cabin and pick up the dough.

"All right," I said. "Let's go back."

"Leave whenever you like," he said. "I'm going myself now."

"Going yourself? Then how the hell do I get back?" I yelled.

"Take the yacht," he told me. "It's yours." Just like that he said it.

"But I can't run no yacht, I don't know how."

"It's very simple. Here, I'll explain—I picked it up myself in less than a minute. Come up to the cabin."

"Uh uh." I got the Special out. "You're taking me back to the dock right now."

"Sorry, there isn't time. I want to be on my way before—"

"You heard me," I said. "Get this boat moving."

"Please. You're making this difficult. I must leave now."

"First you take me back. Then you go off to Mars or wherever it is."

"Mars? Who said anything about—"

He sort of smiled and shook his head. And then he looked at me.

He looked—right—at—me. He looked—into—me. His eyes were like two of those big round silver balls, rolling down into slots behind my eye-balls and crashing right into my skull. They came towards me real slow and real heavy, and I couldn't duck. I felt them coming, and I knew if they ever hit I'd be a goner.

I was out on my feet. Everything was numb. He just smiled and stared and sent his eyes out to get me. They rolled and rolled and I could feel them hit. Then I was—gone.

The last thing I remember was pulling the trigger.

*Statement of Elizabeth Rafferty, M.D.*

**A**T 9:30 SUNDAY MORNING, he rang the bell. I remember the time exactly, because I'd just finished breakfast and I was switching on the radio to get the war news. Apparently they'd found another Soviet boat, this one in Charleston Harbor, with an atomic device aboard. The Coast Guard and the Air Force were both on emergency, and it—

The bell rang, and I opened the door.

There he stood. He must have been 6-foot-4, at the very least. I had to look up at him to see his smile, but it was worth it.

"Is the doctor in?" he asked.

"I'm Dr. Rafferty."

"Good. I was hoping I'd be lucky enough to find you here. I just came along the street, taking a chance on locating a physician. You see, it's rather an emergency—"

"I gathered that." I stepped back. "Won't



you come inside? I dislike having my patients bleed all over the front stoop."

He glanced down at his left arm. He was bleeding, all right. And from the hole in his coat, and the powder-marks, I knew why.

"In here," I said. We went into the office. "Now, if you'll let me help you with your coat and shirt, Mr.—"

"Smith," he said.

"Of course. Up on the table. That's it. Now, easy—let me do it—there. Well! A nice neat perforation, upper triceps. In again, out again. It looks as if you were lucky, Mr. Smith. Hold still now. I'm going to probe. . . . This may hurt a bit. . . . Good! . . . We'll just sterilize, now—"

All the while I kept watching him. He had a gambler's face, but not the mannerisms. I couldn't make up my mind about him. He went through the whole procedure without a sound or a change of expression.

Finally I got him bandaged up. "Your arm will probably be stiff for several days. I wouldn't advise you to move around too much. How did it happen?"

"Accident."

"Come now, Mr. Smith." I got out the pen and looked for a form. "Let's not be children. You know as well as I do that a physician must make a full report on any gunshot wound."

"I didn't know." He swung off the table.

"Who gets the report?"

"The police."

"No!"

"Please, Mr. Smith! I'm required by law to—"

"Take this."

He fished something out of his pocket with his right hand and threw it on the desk. I stared at it. I'd never seen a 5,000-dollar bill before, and it was worth staring at.

"I'm going now," he said. "As a matter of fact, I've never really been here."

I shrugged. "As you will," I told him. "Just one thing more, though."

"What's that?"

I stooped, reached into the left-hand upper drawer of the desk, and showed him what I kept there.

"Sorry," she said. "This is something I hate to do. But I'm calling the police, and if you move I'll plug you."



"This is a .22, Mr. Smith," I said. "It's a lady's gun. I've never used it before, except on the target range. I would hate to use it now, but I warn you that if I do you're going to have trouble with your right arm. As a physician, my knowledge of anatomy combines with my ability as a marksman. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I do. But you don't. Look, you've got to let me go. It's important. I'm not a criminal!"

"Nobody said you were. But you will be, if you attempt to evade the law by neglecting to answer my questions for this report. It must be in the hands of the authorities within the next twenty-four hours."

He chuckled. "They'll never read it."

I sighed. "Let's not argue. And don't reach into your pocket, either."

He smiled at me. "I have no weapon. I was just going to increase your fee."

Another bill fluttered to the table. Ten thousand dollars. Five thousand plus 10 thousand makes 15. It added up.

"Sorry," I said. "This all looks very tempting to a struggling young doctor—but I happen to have old-fashioned ideas about such things. Besides, I doubt if I could get change from anyone, because of all this excitement in the newspapers over—"

I stopped, suddenly, as I remembered. Five-thousand and 10-thousand-dollar bills. They added up, all right. I smiled at him across the desk.

"Where are the paintings, Mr. Smith?" I asked.

It was his turn to sigh. "Please, don't question me. I don't want to hurt anyone. I just want to go, before it's too late. You were kind to me. I'm grateful. Take the money and forget it. This report is foolishness, believe me."

"Believe you? With the whole country in an uproar, looking for stolen art masterpieces, and Communists hiding under every bed? Maybe it's just feminine curiosity, but I'd like to know." I took careful aim. "This isn't conversation, Mr. Smith. Either you talk or I shoot."

"All right. But it won't do any good." He leaned forward. "You've got to believe that. It won't do any good. I could show you the paintings, yes. I could give them to you. And it wouldn't help a bit. Within twenty-four hours they'd be as useless as that report you wanted to fill out."

"Oh, yes, the report. We might as well get started with it," I said. "In spite of your rather pessimistic outlook. The way you talk, you'd think the bombs were going to fall here tomorrow."

"They will," he told me. "Here, and everywhere."

"Very interesting." I shifted the gun to my left hand and took up the fountain pen. "But now, to business. Your name, please. Your real name."

"Kim Logan."

"Date of birth?"

"November 25th, 2903."

I raised the gun. "The right arm," I said. "Medial head of the triceps. It will hurt, too."

"November 25th, 2903," he repeated. "I came here last Sunday at 10 P.M., your time. By the same chronology I leave tonight at nine. It's a 169-hour cycle."

"What are you talking about?"

"My instrument is out there in the bay. The paintings and manuscripts are there. I intended to remain submerged until the departure moment tonight, but a man shot me."

"You feel feverish?" I asked. "Does your head hurt?"

"No. I told you it was no use explaining things. You won't believe me, any more than you believed me about the bombs."

"Let's stick to facts," I suggested. "You admit you stole the paintings. Why?"

"Because of the bombs, of course. The war is coming, the big one. Before tomorrow morning your planes will be over the Russian border and their planes will retaliate. That's only the beginning. It will go on for months, years. In the end—shambles. But the masterpieces I take will be saved."

"How?"

I told you. Tonight, at nine, I return to my own place in the time-continuum." He raised his hand. "Don't tell me it's not possible. According to your present-day concepts of physics it would be. Even according to our science, only forward movement is demonstrable. When I suggested my project to the Institute they were skeptical. But they built the instrument according to my specifications, nevertheless. They permitted me to use the money from the Historical Foundation at Fort Knox. And I received an ironic blessing prior to my departure. I rather imagine my actual vanishment caused raised eyebrows. But that will be nothing compared to the reaction upon my return. My triumphant return, with a cargo of art masterpieces presumably destroyed nearly a thousand years in the past!"

"Let me get this straight," I said. "According to your story, you came here because you knew war was going to break out and you wanted to salvage some old masters from destruction. Is that it?"

"Precisely. It was a wild gamble, but I had the currency. I've studied the era as closely as any man can from the records available. I knew about the linguistic peculiarities of the age—you've had no trouble understanding me, have you? And I managed to work out a plan. Of course I haven't been entirely successful, but I've managed a great deal in less than a week's time. Perhaps I can return again—earlier—maybe a year or so beforehand, and procure more." His eyes grew bright. "Why not? We

could build more instruments, come in a body. We could get everything we wanted, then."

I shook my head. "For the sake of argument, let's say for a minute that I believe you, which I don't. You've stolen some paintings, you say. You're taking them back to 29-something-or-other with you, tonight. You hope. Is that the story?"

"That's the truth."

"Very well. Now you suggest that you might repeat the experiment on a larger scale. Come back to a point a year before this in time and collect more masterpieces. Again, let's say you do it. What will happen to the paintings you took with you?"

"I don't follow you."

"Those paintings will be in your era, according to you. But a year ago they hung in various galleries. Will they be there when you come back? Surely they can't co-exist."

He smiled. "A pretty paradox. I'm beginning to like you, Dr. Rafferty."

"Well, don't let the feeling grow on you. It's not reciprocal, I assure you. Even if you were telling the truth, I can't admire your motives."

"What's wrong with my motives?" He stood up, ignoring the gun. "Isn't it a worthwhile goal—to save immortal treasures from the senseless destruction of a tribal war? The world deserves the preservation of its artistic heritage. I've risked my existence for the sake of bringing beauty to my own time—where it can be properly appreciated and enjoyed by minds no longer obsessed with the greed and cruelty I find here."

"Big words," I said. "But the fact remains. You stole those paintings."

"Stole? I saved them! I tell you, before the year is out they'd be utterly destroyed. Your galleries, your museums, your libraries—everything will go. Is it stealing to carry precious articles from a burning temple?" He leaned over me. "Is that a crime?"

"Why not stop the fire, instead?" I countered. "You know—from historical records, I suppose—that war breaks out tonight or tomorrow. Why not take advantage of your foresight and try to prevent it?"

"I CAN'T. The records are sketchy, incomplete. Events are jumbled. I've been unable to discover just how the war began—or will begin, rather. Some trivial incident, unnamed. Nothing is clear on that point."

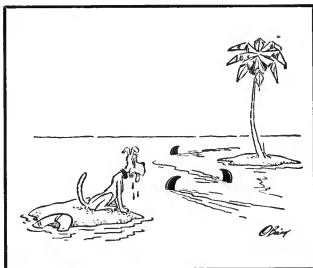
"But couldn't you warn the authorities?"

"And change history? Change the actual sequence of events, rather? Impossible!"

"Aren't you changing them by taking the paintings?"

"That's different."

"Is it?" I stared into his eyes. "I don't see how. But then, the whole thing is impossible. I've wasted too much time in arguing."



"Time!" He looked at the wall clock. "Almost noon. I've got just nine hours left. And so much to do. The instrument must be adjusted."

"Where is this precious mechanism of yours?"

"Out in the bay. Submerged, of course. I had that in mind when it was constructed. You can conceive of the hazards of attempting to move through time and alight on a solid surface; the face of the land alters. But the ocean is comparatively unchanging. I knew if I departed from a spot several miles offshore and arrived there, I'd eliminate most of the ordinary hazards. Besides, it offers a most excellent place of concealment. The principle, you see, is simple. By purely mechanical means I shall raise the instrument above the stratospheric level tonight and then intercalculate dimensionally when I am free of earth's orbit. The gantic-drive will be—"

No doubt about it. I didn't have to wait for the double-talk to know he was crazier than a codfish. A pity, too; he was really a handsome specimen.

"Sorry," I said. "Time's up. This is something I hate to do, but there's no other choice. No, don't move. I'm calling the police, and if you take one step I'll plug you."

"Stop! You mustn't call! I'll do anything, I'll even take you with me. That's it, I'll take you with me! Wouldn't you like to save your life? Wouldn't you like to escape?"

"No. Nobody escapes," I told him. "Especially not you. Now stand still, and no more funny business. I'm making that call."

He stopped. He stood still. I picked up the phone, with a sweet smile. He smiled back. He looked at me.

Something happened.

There has been a great dispute about the clinical aspects of hypnotic therapy. I remember, in school, an attempt being made to hypnotize me. I

was entirely immune. I concluded that a certain degree of cooperation or conditioned suggestibility is required of an individual in order to render him susceptible to hypnosis.

I was wrong.

I was wrong, because I couldn't move now. No lights, no mirrors, no voices, no suggestion. It was just that I couldn't move. I sat there holding the gun. I sat there and watched him walk out, locking the door behind him. I could see and I could feel. I could even hear him say "Good-by."

But I couldn't move. I could function, but only as a paralytic functions. I could, for example, watch the clock.

I watched the clock from 12 noon until almost seven. Several patients came during the afternoon, couldn't get in, and went away. I watched the clock until its face was lost in darkness. I sat there and endured hysteric rigidity until—providentially—the phone rang.

THAT broke it. But it broke me. I couldn't answer that phone. I merely slumped over on the desk, my muscles tightening with pain as the gun fell from my numb fingers. I lay there, gasping and sobbing, for a long time. I tried to sit up. It was agony. I tried to walk. My limbs rejected sensation. It took me an hour to gain control again. And even then, it was merely a partial control—a physical control. My thoughts were another matter.

Seven hours of thinking. Seven hours of *true or false?* Seven hours of accepting and rejecting the impossibly possible.

It was after eight before I was on my feet again, and then I didn't know what to do.

Call the police? Yes—but what could I tell them? I had to be sure, I had to know.

And what did I know? *He was out in the bay, and he'd leave at nine o'clock.* There was an instrument which would rise above the stratosphere—

I got in the car and drove. The dock was deserted. I took the road over to the Point, where there's a good view. I had the binoculars. The stars were out, but no moon. Even so, I could see pretty clearly.

There was a small yacht bobbing on the water, but no lights shone. Could that be it?

No sense taking chances. I remembered the radio report about the Coast Guard patrols.

So I did it. I drove back to town and stopped at a drugstore and made my call. Just reported the presence of the yacht. Perhaps they'd investigate, because there were no lights. Yes, I'd sat there and wait for them if they wished.

I didn't stay, of course. I went back to the Point. I went back there and trained my binoculars on the yacht. It was almost nine when I saw the cutter come along, moving up behind the yacht with deadly swiftness.

It was exactly nine when they flashed their

lights—and caught, for an incredible instant, the gleaming reflection of the silver globe that rose from the water, rose straight up toward the sky.

Then came the explosion and I saw the shattering before I heard the echo of the report. They had portable anti-aircraft, something of the sort. It was effective.

One moment the globe soared upward. The next moment there was nothing. They blew it to bits.

And they blew me to bits with it. Because if there *was* a globe, perhaps he was inside. With the masterpieces, ready to return to another time. The story was true, then, and if that was true, then—

I guess I fainted. My watch showed 10:30 when I came to and stood up. It was 11 before I made it to the Coast Guard Station and told my story.

Of-course, nobody believed me. Even D. Halvorsen from emergency—he said he did, but he insisted on the injection and they took me here to the hospital.

It would have been too late, anyway. That globe did the trick. They must have contacted Washington immediately, with their story of a new secret Soviet weapon destroyed offshore. Coming on the heels of finding those bomb-laden ships, it was the final straw. Somebody gave the orders and our planes were on their way.

I've been writing all night. Outside in the corridor they're getting radio reports. We've dropped bombs over there. And the alert has gone out, warning us of possible reprisals.

Maybe they'll believe me now. But it doesn't matter any more. It's going to be the way he said it was.

I KEEP thinking about the paradoxes of time-travel. This notion of carrying objects from the present to the future—and this other notion, about altering the past. I'd like to work out the theory, only there's no need. The old masters aren't going into the future. Any more than he, returning to our present, could stop the war.

What had he said? "I've been unable to discover just how the war began—or will begin, rather. Some trivial incident, unnamed."

Well, this was the trivial incident. His visit. If I hadn't made that phone call, if the globe hadn't risen—but I can't bear to think about it any more. It makes my head hurt. All that buzzing and droning noise. . .

I've just made an important discovery. The buzzing and the droning does not come from *inside* my head. I can hear the sirens sounding, too. If I had any doubts about the truth of his claims, they're gone now.

I wish I'd believed him. I wish the others would believe me *now*. But there just isn't any time. . . .

—BY ROBERT BLOCH

# Read All About It...

By John T. Dunlavy  
and John J. Ryan



## CLOCKS

**T**HERE ARE MANY signs that the Age of the Mechanical Clock, which dates to the 14th Century, may now be coming to a close. Today's micro-second civilization requires more accurate determination of time than is possible through sheer mechanical means, and the mechanical clock is rapidly giving way to the electric and electronic. The industry already produces annually more than seven million electric clocks and more than a million electric automobile clocks.

**F**EW CRAFTS have contributed so much to the progress of the world as clockmaking, and none has achieved a higher degree of perfection. Among the by-products of the search for better clocks can be counted the principle of mass-production and the development of both the steam and the gasoline engine. The finest mechanical clocks are accurate to within a few seconds per year despite the fact that a one-second pendulum swings 86,400 times every 24 hours, thus multiplying the slightest error that number of times.

**C**LOCKMAKERS ARE among the most vitally needed craftsmen in time of war, yet there is a tremendous shortage in this country. According to Gustave Voight of the Yonkers Watch and Clock Shop, one of the few remaining master craftsmen, this is because people are losing their appreciation for fine clocks. "Clock-making was one of the most highly developed of all arts in so far as movement and design of case are concerned, but today there is only one fine clock still being made in America," says Mr. Voight. "Electric clocks are not clocks at all. They are simple electric motors timed by the cycle at the power source. Their wheels spin too rapidly, heat too

much and wear out too quickly to compare them with mechanical clocks. They have no escapement [the contrivance which controls the movement of the wheels, and causes the "tick-tock"] and little workmanship. In fact, they shouldn't even be called clocks."

**S**WITZERLAND, the land of watches, does not make many clocks. Most fine clocks come from England, Germany and France, where the industries are subsidized in order to keep the craft alive. Clockmakers consider that the finest clocks ever made were English.

**T**HE FIRST REAL clock is generally credited to Henry de Vick, who in 1379 was commissioned by Charles the Fifth of France to construct a clock in Paris. It was the first to include an escapement, making it an instrument for measuring instead of guessing at time. Like all the early clocks it had but one hand and was used to toll out the hours, hence the name "clock" from the French "cloche" meaning "bell." It lost about two hours per day, but like many other early clocks, it continued in working order for nearly 500 years.

**T**HE MOST FAMOUS clock in the world is probably the Strasbourg Cathedral Clock, 30 feet high. A marvel of ingenuity, it has one of the most elaborate movements ever constructed, yet most of its automatic attachments have nothing to do with telling time. It tells time to the minute, the day, and the month, and gives the position of the moon as well as that of planets and stars as seen from Strasbourg. Little myth-

ological figures indicate the day of the week and each noon hour the 12 apostles gather before a figure of Christ while a cock flaps its wings and crows.

**T**HE CHRONOMETER is considered the most precise mechanical clock. Its inventor, John Harrison, won a prize of £20,000 offered by the British government for discovering a method of determining longitude at sea—pendulum clocks were of no use on the ocean. On a five-month's voyage in 1762 his chronometer showed an error of less than one minute. No clock ever keeps perfect time. The best clocks are adjusted so that errors are regular, losing or gaining exact amount each day.

**E**ARLY AMERICAN clockmakers were carpenters and their clocks were made of wood. The first American steeple clocks were paid for by compulsory subscription of citizens in the area. One such was that in Boston's old North Church by which Paul Revere timed the start of his famous ride. It was destroyed in the hurricane of 1954. The replacement for the historic timepiece will also be paid for by subscription, this time from volunteers all over the nation.

**I**N COLONIAL DAYS in America no one ever heard of "grandfather" clocks. They were called "tall," "long-case" or "Coffin" clocks. The term was popularized in the 1880's when the song "My Grandfather's Clock" swept England and America.

**C**LOCK HANDS ON dummy clocks and display clocks are traditionally set at the hour of 8:18, only because this position of the hands is symmetrical and leaves plenty of space for the jeweler's name.



# *Your Future Is SAFER*

BY  
SIDNEY MARGOLIUS

*Your stake in Social Security is equal to a \$40,000 insurance policy that can help you retire, can protect your family if you die. Yet thousands lose part or all of that stake because they don't know how to take advantage of it.*

**T**HERE was a widow in Los Angeles who needed money badly. But for several years after her husband's death she passed up a monthly check which she could have had merely by going to the nearest Social Security office. She forfeited these payments because she never fully understood the Social Security rights bequeathed her by her husband. He had never explained them to her—if he ever understood them himself.

A man in New Jersey has passed up monthly payments for himself and his wife for the past two years because he is still working and never realized, until his son recently made inquiries, that after a certain age (now 72) he could have both his job and his retirement checks.

These are only too typical of the thousands of cases in which people unknowingly and often through shocking carelessness, have been forfeiting



one of their most valuable assets—their Social Security rights. At times in the past, a leading insurance company estimates, almost a million Social Security pensions have gone unclaimed because people didn't know they were entitled to them.

Social Security now provides more benefits than ever before. It can go a long way toward safeguarding your own and your family's future—but only if you know what the score is. Most people don't.

Not long ago two investigators from the New York State School of Industrial and Labor relations, Dr. John McConnell and Robert Risley, picked what they considered a pretty representative American city—Elmira, New York (population 50,000). They interviewed several hundred wage-earners and discovered these startling facts:

**» Eight out of 10 had only a "poor knowledge" of Social Security.** Six out of 10 had no idea that Social Security would pay their families monthly allowances if anything happened to them.

**» Only two out of 100 knew about the rehabilitation program** which can help a disabled worker regain his earning power through medical care and vocational retraining. Even fewer knew about the federal-state children's programs which provide medical treatment for seriously ill or crippled kids whose families can't afford it.

**» Only three out of 10 knew that a war veteran or his widow may be eligible for pensions for total disability, even if non-service-connected, and for death, if he was already receiving service-connected disability or retirement payments.**

# Than You Think!

**» Fifteen out of every 100 didn't even know** they could get workmen's compensation if they got hurt on the job. And there were a scattering who, incredibly, didn't know they were entitled to unemployment insurance if they lost their jobs.

**» Ironically, the more a man was likely to need** these various rights and benefits, the more likely he was to know nothing about them. The men with the most children knew the least about Social Security. Salesmen and clerks knew more about workmen's compensation than the men in more physically-hazardous jobs.

These facts spotlight the reason why so many people are missing out on money that is rightfully theirs. Social Security payments are never made automatically. To collect them, you have to apply for them. So you *have to know* what you are entitled to. No official will ever knock on your door

with an envelope full of cash. Generally there is no way Social Security officials can tell when you or your family become eligible.

Many people still think of Social Security only in terms of old-age pensions. That's what the program started out as 18 years ago. But two years later another feature was added: payments to the family in case its breadwinner dies. This is actually the most immediately valuable feature of Social Security to younger men.

When you retire at 65 you and your wife can get as much as \$1,950 a year—tax free. But while you're still working, you have the equivalent of a \$40,000 insurance policy that would pay your dependents up to \$200 a month. A \$40,000 whole-life insurance policy taken out at age 35 would cost you about \$1,100 a year. Under Social Security you get the same protection for about \$100 a year.

But unless you know the rules, your family can lose out. Recently a widow with two youngsters sought my advice. The Social Security office had said she and the boys could not get payments. It seemed that in the three years before her husband's death he had worked only sporadically—because of illness and lay-offs. So he was neither "currently nor fully insured"—unfamiliar but tragic terms to this woman. He wasn't "currently insured" because he hadn't earned enough during the three years before death. And he wasn't "fully insured" because he didn't have enough total Social Security credits.

Nothing could be done now for his family. But if the man had only known the need to keep insured, somehow he could have maintained his

family protection even if he only did part-time jobs. His Social Security record showed that he had needed only \$18 more of earnings in one three-month period, and \$30 more in another, to have qualified his family for payments.

Right now the Social Security Administration is looking for some 115,000 women, 120,000 children and 5,000 elderly dependent parents who have suddenly become eligible for benefits under the new rules. They had been denied payments previously because their husbands, fathers or sons at time of death hadn't had enough credits. Will they now go to their local Social Security offices and claim these payments? If past experience is any guide, many won't—because they don't know they can. There are also thousands of elderly men and their wives, getting comparatively small payments because their benefits were pulled down by periods of disablement or unemployment, who now could col-

## ANY QUESTIONS?

*As a special service to readers, BLUEBOOK will try to answer specific questions about Social Security and your rights to it. Send your questions and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Social Security, Bluebook, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.*

lect more under the new rules. But again, many don't know about it.

Not only is it important that you be alert to your precious Social Security stake, but that your wife be, too. A young widow recently failed to apply for Social Security payments because she went back to work. She never realized that, even though she was earning more than one is allowed to earn while drawing Social Security, her children were still eligible for their checks. She has applied now, but only after losing over \$3,000 in payments.

Another misconception that has led people to forfeit payments is the vague idea that Social Security is solely for the needy. It's not. You can have any amount of income from other pensions, private insurance, dividends and savings, and still collect Social Security. The only restriction is that anyone who keeps working loses part of his payments in proportion to the amount earned over \$1,200 a year.

You ought to know your potential Social Security benefits as accurately as you know the balance in your bank account. On page 65 there's a table that tells what you're entitled to get at various income levels. To calculate your own potential benefits, you first figure out your average monthly wage since 1950. You add all wages up to \$3,600 for each year from 1950 to 1954, then divide by the number of months. For each year after 1954, you'll be able to count up to \$4,200 of income a year.

You're also allowed to discard up to five years of low or no earnings, IF you base your average on earnings for at least six different calendar quarters. (Calendar quarters are: Jan-Mar.; April-June; July-Sept.; Oct.-Dec.) This will be a big help because, in the past, stretches of unemployment dragged down a man's average monthly wage and thus cut his benefits.

Before 1955, the highest possible "average monthly wage" under the \$3,600-a-year limit was \$300. After 1955, it will be \$350. If you're now earning \$4,200 a year, you're already building a higher average. By the middle of 1956, you'll have worked six calendar quarters at that income. So you'll be able to discard the five years of 1950 through 1954 and calculate your monthly average entirely under the \$4,200 rule.

Once you've worked out your average monthly

wage, you're ready to figure benefits. You get your "monthly primary benefit" by taking 55 percent of the first \$110 of your average monthly wage and adding 20 percent of the next \$240.

Take Joe H. Brown, a hypothetical individual with a wife and two youngsters who earns at least \$4,200 a year from now on. He thus will have an average monthly wage of \$350—the maximum, even though he may earn more. His primary benefit will be \$108.50 a month (55 percent of the first \$110 of his average monthly wage, or \$60.50, plus 20 percent of the remaining \$240, or \$48).

All other benefits stem from the primary benefit. Here's how you figure them:

*On retirement*, you receive the total primary benefit. When your wife reaches 65, she gets an additional 50 percent of the primary benefit. In Joe's case, he gets \$108.50 a month when he retires, and his wife receives \$54.25 a month (50 percent of \$108.50) when she is 65.

*A widow with children* under 18 gets 75 percent of the primary benefit for herself, and 50 percent for each child, plus an additional 25 percent distributed among the children or going entirely to an only child. If anything happened to Joe, therefore, Mrs. Brown would get \$81.40 a month. The two kids would each get \$54.25, plus \$27.13 between them. Total: \$217.03. But the maximum for any one family is \$200 a month; so that's what they'd get.

*A widow with no dependent children* doesn't get benefits until she's 65. Then she receives three-fourths of her husband's primary benefit a month. However, she's immediately entitled to a lump-sum payment of up to \$255. In the past, this has been one of the benefits most frequently forfeited. To collect it, the husband's death must be reported within two years.

*Dependent parents of single men* can get monthly payments. The parent must be 65 or over

## 240,000 UNCLAIMED CHECKS

*The Social Security Administration is currently looking for more than 240,000 people who are entitled to receive regular monthly checks. Are you one?*

and must have been getting at least half his or her support from you. Each parent gets three-fourths of your primary benefit. The parent who pays the funeral expense can claim the lump-sum payment.

Even if you are divorced, your ex-wife can collect benefits as long as she has your children under 18 in her care, and if she had been getting at least half her support from you. She would get payments even if you left another family. (Both fam-

## WHAT YOU GET

If Average  
Monthly  
Wage\* Is



**\$150**

**\$68.50**

**\$102.80**

**\$120.00**

**\$51.40**

**200**

**78.50**

**117.80**

**157.10**

**58.90**

**250**

**88.50**

**132.80**

**177.20**

**66.40**

**300**

**98.50**

**147.80**

**197.10**

**73.90**

**350**

**108.50**

**162.80**

**200.00**

**81.40**

*\*See text for explanation of how to figure this as high as possible*

ilies would get full payments.) If she remarries she can't collect, but the children still can.

So, you see, there are plenty of potential benefits. The important thing is for you to protect them. Here are tips for doing just that—tips based in large part on the mistakes others made that lost them benefits:

**>> If you are laid up** for a long period, apply for a "disability freeze." You won't get any payments while sick; although Congress has been urged repeatedly to include payments for long or permanent disability, it has consistently refused to do so. But if you do become totally disabled for six months or more, you now can have your earnings record "frozen" during that period to protect your benefit rights and benefit amount. Formerly, when a man became disabled for a long stretch, his average wage inevitably was pulled down by his lack of earnings, and if the disablement proved permanent, he and his family sometimes lost all Social Security rights because they lacked enough total working time.

**>> If you are laid off**, try to stay insured. Six calendar quarters of coverage during the immediately preceding three years (12 quarters) keeps you insured. As little as \$50 of earnings gets you credit

for a quarter. Or \$400 earned in self employment in a year gets you credit for four quarters. Once you are "fully insured," you or your family qualify for benefits even if you are no longer working. You are "fully insured" as soon as you have one quarter of coverage for every two quarters that there are between the first half of 1951 and the calendar quarter in which you reach 65 or in which you die. Any quarter you worked under Social Security after 1936 counts, including Armed Forces service in World War II or since. Once you have 40 quarters—the equivalent of 10 years of covered employment—you're fully insured for life and entitled to all benefits whether you chalk up any more credits or not.

**>> Brief your family** about Social Security. Remind your wife—or dependent parents, if you're single—that if anything happens to you, they must apply for payments. See that they have a record of your Social Security number. It's also wise to alert a relative or friend to apply for payments for your kids if anything happens to both you and your wife.

Every family should have some proof of age for all members. It may be vital some day to show

that you or your wife are 65, or that the children are under 18 and entitled to payments if you die. Useful documents in order of acceptability include: birth or baptismal certificates; hospital birth record; notarized family Bible record; or school, naturalization, immigration, military, passport, vaccination, insurance policies or marriage records.

Sometimes, in order to land a job, a man will list himself on his Social Security record as younger than he actually is. Later he'll claim benefits on his real age. Social Security officials will question this discrepancy, but will accept your actual age if you can prove it.

**>> Check on your own credits.** Your employer notifies the Social Security office of your earnings and each year must give you a receipt for the Social Security taxes sliced from your pay. But any error that he or the Social Security office makes could lose you some credits. So it's worth keeping track of your own earnings and holding on to pay envelopes, pay check stubs, tax records or other evidence.

One family learned this the hard way. After the husband died, his wife tried to collect Social Security, but was refused. It seems there was no record of her husband having worked during a certain period necessary to keep his coverage intact. Although the woman was certain that he had had a job at the time, she couldn't remember the name of his employer, a small businessman who had since closed up shop and moved out of town.

You can get your official record to date by getting form OAR-7004 at the nearest Social Security field office, filling it out and mailing it to Social Security Administration, Candler Building, Baltimore 2, Maryland. Or write a letter giving name, address, birth date and Social Security number. You ought to compare your credits with the official record at least once every three years; changes can't be made after that.

### SHOW YOUR WIFE

*When you've finished reading this article, show it to your wife. Then clip it and put it with your insurance policies or some other place where your wife could find it if something happened to you.*

Be sure that you hold on to the same Social Security number. Otherwise all your earnings may not be credited to your account. Make a note of your number and keep it in a safe place where you can find it. If you lose your Social Security card and get a new one, check to see that it bears the same number and that you give any new employer your correct number.

**>> Beware name dropping.** When you switch jobs, give your name for payroll purposes exactly as on your Social Security card. Sometimes a man will use a middle initial or name, then later drop it or adopt another. That increases the chance that his credits may wind up in the account of someone with a similar name.

**>> Apply promptly.** When you or your family become eligible for payments, don't delay applying for them. Payments can be made retroactively for only one year.

Some personal savings or private insurance may still be necessary or desirable to supplement Social Security family insurance. How much, depends on your family's own income need, and your wife's and children's ages.

In the case of our hypothetical friend, Joe Brown, his wife and kids would get \$200 a month if he died. But even if she were a thrifty gal, she would still need about \$50 a month more. Too, say she is 35 now, and the youngest child is two. Sixteen years hence when the youngest is 18 and she is 51, the Social Security checks will stop. She won't see another one for 14 years—until she's 65.

Here is a formula that Joe, or you, can use to estimate how much private insurance is needed to supplement Social Security. It takes about \$950 of insurance or savings to provide a family with an income of \$5 a month for 20 years, assuming the money will earn a moderate interest rate of three percent. Now suppose Joe wants to provide Mrs. Brown with \$50 a month for 30 years, which would pad the family's potential Social Security benefits and also give her \$50 a month to assist during the 14-year drought. This would be 10 times the amount of money for half again as long as the \$950 would give. So, Joe would need about \$14,000 of insurance or savings ( $\$950 \times 10 \times 1.5$ ).

Or if he wanted to provide \$50 a month to round out the Social Security payments, and \$100 a month during the 14-year stoppage, he'd need about \$21,000 of insurance (about \$14,000 to yield \$50 a month for 30 years, plus about \$7,000 to give an extra \$50 for 14 years).

Every five years or so, Joe could shed some of this insurance. For example, five years from now he would need only \$19,000 of insurance or savings to assure his family the same supplementary income.

Social Security may not fill all insurance needs for all families. But it certainly makes the job of safeguarding your future easier than ever before. A man of 35 to 40 can carry \$15,000 of five-year renewable term insurance to fill in the Social Security gaps at a cost of less than \$150 a year during the first five years.

If you're in the same boat as most of the rest of us, your \$40,000 stake in Social Security is probably the biggest nest egg you'll ever have. Like a papa hawk, you'll do well to watch that egg carefully until it hatches.

—BY SIDNEY MARGOLIUS



By Pfc. BILL SAFIRE

# How to Flip a G.I. Lid...

The face of the dogface hangs long  
when certain letters from home arrive. Here  
a new young humorist gives you the word.

**T**HIS LITTLE VERSE, written by a dejected GI, was tacked up high on the wall of our Orderly Room, next to the window where the mail is handed out:

*My name is Joe—  
And now you know  
Why I'm so pale and wan.  
My girl, she wrote  
A little note  
That started off, "Dear John..."*

A "dear John", as every rejected suitor knows, is a letter from a girl that always includes the classic sentence: "I know this comes as a surprise, but it would be better for all parties concerned if you and I made a clean break."

When a GI reads this sentence for the first time, he feels the urge to get his hands on his ex-girl's delicate white neck and make a "clean break" of that, but his fury cools when he realizes that his dilemma is as ancient as the art of war itself. In the Coliseum of Ancient Rome, when a lusty Roman wench turned thumbs down on a gladiator, she was, in effect, signaling one of history's first dear Johns.

But dear John letters are not the only kind of mail that prove devastating to a soldier's morale; all letters are potent psychological warfare weapons, and even a box of homemade cookies is a Very Important Parcel. However, when the cookies come

in crumbs and the letters crummier, then the face of the dogface hangs long.

Several recruits at Fort Dix, New Jersey, not long ago formed the Fort Dix Letter-Receiving Consultation Board to study this problem of correspondence. The lessons we learned did not enable us to formulate any foolproof method of how to write to your serviceman, but we are dead certain we now know how *not* to write to a GI.

After considerable experience, the Board decided that—above and beyond striking terror into a soldier's heart with a dread dear-John—there are



five outstanding points for a civilian to remember in writing to a serviceman:

1. *Don't get suddenly formal.*
2. *Don't burst with pride about us.*
3. *Don't use the latest slang.*
4. *Don't fight the problem.*
5. *Don't protest your innocence.*

To illustrate these key "don'ts," actual case histories will be used, although professional ethics forbid use of the names of any of the Board's clients.

**1. Don't get formal.** What happens to a perfectly down-to-earth pal of a dad when he picks up a pen? There is an abrupt Jekyll-Hyde switch from Dad to Father. It is an eerie transformation: his battered hat becomes a sweeping, three-cornered affair, his stubby pen becomes a long, pointed quill, and Pa suddenly assumes the character of Lord Chesterfield Writing a Letter to His Son.

Our squad leader submitted a good example of this to the Board:

*Dear Son,*

*Your mother and I read your letters with a large measure of pride. When I was a member*

*of the Armed Forces back in World War I—the war to end all wars, heh, heh—[Author's note: leave the cynicism to us, please—it's one of our few comforts.] I went through the same difficulties through which you are now going. But allow me to say this, my son: Army life is doing you a world of good.*

Now, if there are any two phrases that can bring a recruit to a quick boil, they are "Army life" and "world of good" spoken in the same breath. Then, after a few short paragraphs about what was going on at home—what a GI really looks for—the Old Man concluded with: "I remain, Your Father."

"What does Pa mean he remains my father?" our crestfallen client wanted to know. The Board explained that it was a technical way of saying that the Old Man's feelings remained the same toward his son, but this cut no ice with our squad leader.

We soon found a way to answer these "Dear Absalom, My Son, My Son" letters. The following food for thought was slipped into an ordinary letter home:

*Father, there is something weighing heavily on my mind. A friend of mine has fallen*

*Illustrated by IAN ROSS*





*in love with a girl who hangs out every night in the town bar. Our captain has put the bar off-limits because of her, but this friend of mine is deeply in love and wants to marry her.*

*If you were this guy's father, would you approve?*

Return mail brought a special-delivery answer from our squad leader's father, written in an angry pencil scrawl; the loaded letter had completely dislodged his formality:

*Now look here Louie—[a warm, personal salutation] just because you're a few thousand miles from home don't mean you're any damn hotshot Casanova. Ma and me know just what you're up to, and I can still pin your ears back whenever I feel like it and I feel like it right now. I was a dogface too, remember? So you can tell that "friend" of yours—*

The letter continued in that truly paternal, informal vein for several pages. We all admired its forthright conclusion: "See? Pa."

"That's really my pa," said our squad leader, with a big grin. At this point, we felt safe in laying down our first Law: Don't get formal.

2. *Don't burst with pride about us.* This second axiom came into being while we were out on bivouac, seated around the breakfast fire. We had heated up our cans of meat and beans, and

were watching a guy we all called "The Hard-Luck Kid" trying to cook his meal.

"I can't seem to get the hang of cooking C-rations," the Hard-Luck Kid said. He opened the top of the can, placed it on a forked stick, held it over the flames in the proper manner, and waited for the inevitable.

We all stopped eating and stared, fascinated, as the meat and beans in the Kid's C-ration rose up out of the can in a solid lump, tottered, and fell into the fire with a shattering sizzle. This never happened to anybody else, but it never failed to happen to the Hard-Luck Kid. Our topkick said it was a curse.

"I wouldn't mind it so much," the Kid used to say, "except for these letters from my kid brother. He thinks I'm the greatest soldier ever." After passing his helmet around for our leftovers, he showed us one of the letters from his 10-year-old brother:

*Dear Bud—you been in the Army three months now. Seen any combat yet? I told all the kids on the block what you wrote me about the Army making you tough and there are two big guys who carry icepicks waiting to fight you for the Championship of the Block when you get home.*

*"I hope you see combat soon because when you do I know you will swipe a knife as a souvenir and send it to me. I sure could use a knife because I am up at Camp for the summer. We just got back from a ten-mile hike. Fun, boy!"* [Even after a four-mile hike the Hard-Luck Kid would collapse, exhausted.]

"And we really are killers—  
until one small voice speaks up."



*We camped out in the woods last night, and this morning the counselor let us fix our own breakfast just like you do in the Army. I fixed a real good hot breakfast out of a little can because I want to be a good soldier just like you.*

*Your loving brother, Herbie. P.S.—Don't forget the knife!"*

"He thinks I'm Sergeant York, or Captain Video," moaned the Kid. "How can I live up to his ideal if I can't even heat beans?"

It's cruel to disillusion your kid brother, so the Board recommended that the Hard-Luck Kid buy a knife in the PX, dip it in ketchup and send it along with no explanation. He agreed, but it made him feel dishonest; we often get that guilty feeling when we receive those give-'em-hell-for-me letters.

**3. Don't use the latest slang.** The Fort Dix Letter-Receiving Consultation Board had gained some fame by this time, and a letter was submitted

hurst section of Brooklyn, who gave us this translation: "The first *gone* in the sentence is a regular gone, like 'I'm gone outside for a walk.' The second one means 'Crazy, man!' And to *dig* is to understand. So all that this chick means is that she misses her guy."

By the time the translation reached the confused GI at the other side of the base, it was garbled into: "She knew you for a crazy man all along, and she's gone out of your life. Tough, Bud."

The lesson we learned here is never to use the latest slang in writing a man far away from home; it makes him feel as though life were passing him by, and makes him wonder if he'll ever get back into the swing of things. And besides—to a GI, the word "dig," no matter what its current meaning, will always mean: "Here's a shovel—intrench yourself!"

**4. Don't fight the problem.** That single sentence, probably the most-often used four words in the military, ends all arguments. It conceals whole volumes of Army psychology and philosophy.

To "fight the problem" means to offer all sorts of good reasons for not doing something that everyone knows has to be done. "Why peel these potatoes?" demands the new man on KP. "With the skins on, they are tastier, more nourishing, easier to serve . . ." He is fighting the problem. The potatoes *will* be peeled.

The letters from home that hurt combat training most are those that encourage the trainee to fight the problem. For example, the hardest of all a trainee's "problems" is the sudden switch from normal human being into cold-blooded killer. He must make that change if he is to be an effective combat soldier, but it is very difficult when he gets a letter with this thought in it:

"It's all right to become physically tough, darling, but don't let them harden your mind and make you cruel. Don't learn to be nasty. Stay as sweet as you are . . ."

That is fighting the problem. The soldier who received this letter got to thinking about it, and began to fight the problem of mental preparation for close combat. In bayonet practice, his fight affected his entire platoon. These were the results of a single fighting-the-problem letter:

The bayonet instructor has to be a combination of psychiatrist and evangelist. "Men," he begins in a low tone. "This is a bayonet. It was not designed to open cans or clean fingernails." This always draws a snicker.

"This weapon is made to thrust into enemy soldiers," says the instructor, louder. "Men," he begins now; the entire platoon swallows audibly. A look of suspicion crosses the face of the man who received the letter urging him to stay as sweet as he is. The bayonet is not at all clean and majestic, like an atom bomb.



"Why, he always asks me to pretend his lips are yours. Now, say Alfred is an Of Varmint!"

to us from the 47th Infantry Regiment, 'way on the other side of the base. In this note, there was just one line that threw the GI who received it: "Now that you're gone, man, I'm digging for the first time how *gone* you really always were!"

We immediately turned this over to our Foreign Language department, a guy from the Benson-

"If you run out of ammo in a tight spot, this bayonet may save your life. It's kill or be killed. The spirit of the bayonet is to kill—" his voice is ringing now "—and you men are all killers! Now I want to hear you sound off—what's the spirit of the bayonet?"

"To kill!" we all roar back, surprised at ourselves. For the first time we all feel that maybe, if the chips were down, we could actually use a bayonet.

"And what are you?"

"Killers!" And we really are, until one small voice interjects a comment that changes us from a raging lynch-mob into a bunch of recruits feeling loolish:

"Who, us?"

One man, the man who got that letter, fought the problem and ruined everything for the platoon. The instructor had us yelling "Killers!" all afternoon until we all felt like characters out of Hemingway, but we never did seem to recapture that real killer-spirit. All because of one letter, to one man, urging him to "fight the problem."

**5. Don't protest your innocence.** The best example of the effect of an innocence-protester was submitted to the Board by the best rifle shot in the company, a former Oklahoma ranch hand, who gingerly handed us a letter written on baby-blue stationery:

*Dearest Pete—*

*"Miss you terribly . . . (etc.) . . . lie awake nights thinking of you . . . (etc.) . . . and I met Alfred again the other night. Really, Pete, he's a sure-enough pal of yours, and I don't know why you always used to call him an Ol' Varmint.*

*Why, if he holds me tight when we're dancing, he always says he knows that he's just a poor substitute for you. And if I should kiss him good-night—just a dogie's lick, darlin', and I only tell you this because you know how level and square-shootin' I am—why, he always asks me to pretend his lips are yours.*

*Now, go ahead and say Alfred is an Ol' Varmint!*

"Methinks," decided the Board, "she doth protest too much." Complete honesty, with all its gory details, is not necessarily the best policy in writing to a GI. And if you decide to cheat, cheat completely. It's a lot less painful all around.

Those, then, are the Five Cardinal Sins of Writing a GI. However, many a good letter is spoiled by the sign-off, and we compiled a short list of endings to avoid:

"Fondly" . . . . . condescending.  
 "Affectionately" . . . . . patronizing.  
 "As Ever" . . . . . noncommittal.  
 "Hugs & Kisses" . . . . . ridiculous.



"Sincerely" . . . . . formal.  
 "Cordially" . . . . . absolutely infuriating.

The above closings can ruin any letter. The simplest and safest way to end a letter is just: "Love, comma, signature." However, many sensitive GIs prefer three lingering dots after the "Love" instead of the cold comma; as the poet laureate of the Letter-Receiving Consultation Board once put it:

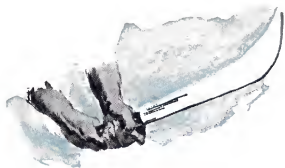
*"A girl can say lots  
 With three little dots . . ."*

The next time you sit down to write a letter to your own serviceman, try using this article as a guide. There is only one more point to warn you about: if your GI's first name happens to be John, *never, never* begin the letter "Dear John." It has all sorts of horrible connotations.

Speaking personally, my own girl never makes any of the aforementioned mistakes. She writes a warm, informal letter, takes care never to burst with undeserved pride about me and never uses the latest slang. She doesn't "fight the problem" and she doesn't protest her innocence, and she signs her letter with "Love" as though she means it.

And then, having avoided all those mistakes, she very carefully puts the letter in her purse—and forgets to mail it.

—By PFC. BILL SAFIRE



# *No Panga for Pieters*

By F. W. Holiday

*The dread Mau Mau had spirited away the old man who defied them. It was up to Nicholson and his patrol to find him—somewhere in the blue-and-green vastness of 219,000 square miles.*

I DON'T LIKE IT, SORR," Sergeant Delaney said. "Not at all. Things are wrong there, sorr." Captain Nicholson could see what he meant, all right. At least two things were wrong; there was no smoke coming from the cooking chimney, and there was a vulture sitting on the roof. Settling flat on his belly he focused his bloomed Zeiss binoculars on the bungalow again. It shot up in sharp detail, quite still, quite lifeless. A few banana trees drooped by the door, listless and unmoving. Nicholson noted they were going brown at the edges. The trees hadn't been watered recently.

"You're right," he said lowering the binoculars and wiping the sweat from his eyes. "It looks as though they've got him. Get ready to close in on both flanks. And watch that hill at the back of the house—they may still be around."

After Delaney had crawled away Nicholson rolled on his side and freed his .38 from its holster. This is what comes of playing patacake with a bunch of native hoodlums, he thought.

"The boys are all set to go," Delaney reported, crawling back. He looked wistful and happy, his bleached khaki drill thick with dust. His square ugly face suddenly brightened. "Should I slip in and have a look, sorr?"

Nicholson thought about that for a moment. The Kenya plain, flat as a wafer, teetered away through the binoculars as he looked around. Scrub, camel-thorn—a few scrawny palms; there was nothing to worry over out there. That left the bungalow itself and the hillock at the back. Those were the danger spots.

"Corporal Wilson's taken a party round the back, sorr," the sergeant said, following his line of reasoning. Nicholson nodded. That simplified the matter; leaving the bungalow.

"We'll go in together," he told the sergeant. "I'll go first—you can cover me. Okay, let's go." He slipped the safety catch off his .38 and bellied forward. Delaney saluted without raising his head. He swung his sten gun into a comfortable position and gave the Captain a 10-yard start. Then he too moved forward.

"Seems empty, sorr," Delaney said from behind in a loud whisper.

Nicholson rested on his elbows. "Yes." He too thought the bungalow was empty. He stood up. "Stay here and give me cover to the front door."

At close quarters the bungalow looked big. Nicholson moved towards the door crab-wise, his



.38 fanning at the blank windows. The banana trees lolled big green shields over him as he touched the edge of the door with his fingertips. He waited and listened but the bungalow was silent. There was nothing at all but a bad smell. He went in.

Delaney, close behind him, coughed and blew out his breath. They went along the central passage and looked into the open rooms on each side. All quite empty—as you would expect if Mau Mau had beaten you to it.

All except the kitchen.

"What is it, sorr?" Delaney asked sharply.

Nicholson came out and shut the door.

"The houseboy, I should think—what's left of him. Better have him buried right away. And find out if Corporal Wilson's got anything to report. I'll skim through these rooms and see if I can find any trace of Pieters."

The sergeant saluted and went.

Nicholson went into the long lounge and looked around. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed. A cane-bottom chair, worn with use, stood beside a felt-topped card table. On the floor was half a bottle of Scotch and an empty glass. He smelled the glass; it still carried a faint whiskey odor. On the walls were some good heads—gemsbok, kudu and buffalo. There were leopard and lion skins on the walls and floor. In the corner was a bookcase holding a few dried-up volumes that had not been opened in years. Not much else. Not a hell of a lot at all. Pieters had gone and that was that. This was a detective's job, not a soldier's. He sat down in the cane chair to think about it.

**I**n Africa, where every other man is an eccentric, Pieters was something more. In his own way he was a legend. He was credited with being the oldest white settler in Kenya which, if true, was a very interesting distinction. He was also said to have gone native. But since he visited town only once in five years he was not in a position to challenge this rumor. They said that he was as shy as a gerunuk and fierce as an old baboon. The Military, however, used stronger terms. Twice the Colonel had sent messages asking him to go into town until Mau Mau were put down, and each time Pieters had lit his pipe with them. What could anybody do with a man like that except let him stew in his own juice? And right now Pieters was probably pegged-out on an ant-hill.

"Tea, sorr?" Delaney's voice said.

Nicholson looked round suspiciously at the steaming mug.

The sergeant grinned. "We buried the stiff and got the stove working," he explained. "There's nothing on the hill, sorr. Not a blasted thing. What do you make of it?"

"Sit down a minute," Nicholson ordered petulantly. The stubbornness of this old fool Pieters was causing him a hell of a lot of trouble. Pieters just about deserved what he had almost certainly got; and that might be anything from 50 panga cuts to a crushed skull. The sergeant found a chair and sat down. He studied his boots until Nicholson spoke.

"You've been stationed two years around Nairobi. Have you ever seen this man Pieters?"

Delaney shook his head. "I've only heard tell of him, sorr. They say he's got a white beard like one of the Sivin Prophets. At Fort Hall we had a warrant officer who said he'd served with Pieters way back in '07."

"Pieters was an Army man, then?" Nicholson said, surprised.

**T**hat's right, sorr. They say he was on the losing side in the Boer War and was proud of it. I heard tell that he used to be a color-sergeant in the Cape Rifles before he came to Kenya. All rumor, sorr, of course."

"And you think he's dead?" Nicholson asked.

Delaney shrugged and took a noisy sip at his tea. "Sure to be."

"Then where's the body?"

Delaney gestured expressively. "Jackals and vultures. Or perhaps they wanted a corpse to use in the initiation ceremonies. There's nothing sacred with them devils, sorr."

Nicholson swallowed the rest of the hot tea, the evaporated milk lingering on his tongue.

"Post a guard," he told the sergeant. "Lay the troops out in open formation round the bungalow—we'll stay here the night. And send the signaler in; I'll inform H.Q."

Delaney looked surprised as he got up. He saluted and went out.

Nicholson found a signal-pad in his pocket. He scribbled a message: "Company H.Q. from Nicholson, Captain, commanding 70 patrol. Routine search of area DY3 continuing. Pieters honest entered by enemy; servant killed. Believe P. may be still alive. Am investigating. Orders. End message." "Bring the reply back right away," Nicholson told the signaller orderly.

The man returned within 10 minutes. He handed Nicholson the reply chit. It said: "Nicholson, Captain, commanding 70 patrol from Company H.Q. Carry on. End message."

So that was that. It was what you called working on a pure hunch.

He had a lot of figuring to do to see Pieter's angle. The only thing to do was to start from the beginning and see it as it must have happened, then the right plan would come easy. Take it in easy stages, he told himself. Pieters was an old resident—he knew this country better than you'll ever know it.

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*Illustrated by ANTHONY KOKINOS*



WHEN Klimbo first heard the blade of the panga he was cooking mealie-mush over the pot-bellied iron stove in the kitchen. As he worked he hummed a tune, but as soon as the panga carelessly sliced through a branch of camel-thorn behind the bungalow his humming stopped as if switched off.

For a long indecisive moment he stood there in his frayed duck shorts, listening, his bare back shining black and greasy. Then with a sharp movement he thrust the pan of mealies to the back of the stove. He listened again, his cheeks quivering and his eyes dilated. Suddenly he swung on his heel and went up the earthen steps leading into the bungalow in one great bound; without pause he hurtled down the passage till he came to the open door of the lounge. There he found Pieters sitting in his cane chair smoking a pipe and facing the open window overlooking the plain.

"Bwana . . ." Klimbo burst out.

"What is it?" Pieters asked in Kikuya. Sitting there he looked like some benevolent patriarch watching over his flocks. White beard, washed and combed, lay over his chest. Thin white hair started from behind a high domed forehead. In build he was lean and his skin, though dark and wrinkled, was healthy. He blew a slow puff of smoke and it eddied up in a single perfect ring.

"Bwana . . ." Klimbo began again. His teeth were chattering now. He turned his panic-filled gaze behind him and listened. His tongue, lips and palate had grown stiff with fear, and he could say no more.

"Hand me a glass, M'Klimbo," Pieters suddenly said. As he took it from the boy's trembling grasp, he pressed Klimbo's wrist urgently.

"Do as I say. Go quickly to the kitchen and hide in the place you made until they have gone. When they have gone I will come for you. After a long time, if I don't come, you must go and tell the Polizzi. Do you understand this? Now go quickly."

Klimbo's mouth opened but there was no sound. He struggled with himself, looking at Pieters, not wanting to go but going all the same because his feet were moving on their own account. Somewhere beyond the window there was a soft lootstep and Klimbo turned and fled, insane with terror.

Pieters sat for a while sipping his whiskey calmly. Outside the bungalow he could hear low voices and the vicious hissing of a panga casually slicing vegetation. The door at the top of the passage creaked as someone opened it slowly. Bare feet moved cautiously over the clay floor. Pieters had finished his whiskey now and he sat quite still with his hands on the arms of the chair. His pipe had gone out.

A man looked in the open doorway. He wore a dirty felt hat with a wide brim, dust-colored slacks and a filthy shirt. He took a slow step into the room, bare feet rustling, and the two-foot panga in his hand gleamed white as it caught the light from

the window. It was a fine-ground razor with the weight of an axe and on the blade were stamped the words, "Made In Birmingham."

The man strutted contemptuously into the middle of the room, the panga swinging from his hand in a slow silver arc. He was not a Kikuya. Under the hat-brim his face, shiny and black with gray sweat round the lips, suggested the Gold Coast. He glanced round the room, at Pieters, and then through the window and across the plain. In his chair Pieters had stiffened and now he turned his head. In a harsh voice he demanded: "What do you want?"

The man with the panga wandered round the room. He looked up at the trophies on the wall with a thin smirk on his lips. He stooped to peer into the bookcase. After a moment he came back.

He said with husky insolence: "You know what we want, Bwana. We want Africa for Africans."

Pieters sat quite still except that his beard shook with fury.

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## make it easy

If you find it hard to find the sights of your varmint rifle at night, try painting the front sight with luminous paint.

—Thomas F. Mitchell, San Angelo, Texas.

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"Has this madness no limit?" he asked thickly. "Do you choose who is an African and who is not? Am I not an African—I, who was born and lived here for forty years before ever thy birth was perpetrated? Is this the logic of the foul structure on which thou wouldst build a new world?"

What the old man said was true. Born in Free-town of a Dutch father and a Portuguese mother, he had never set foot outside the continent.

The man with the panga shrugged indifferently and said nothing. He knew what he knew and a panga can always be used to shorten unpleasant monologues when the hearer wearies of them. As he shrugged there was a slap of many feet along the passage and the room filled with men—Kikuyas. When he heard them Pieters shrugged also and sat in aloof dignity. Angrily he waited for the end.

One of them asked offensively: "Where is that animal's off-spring, Klimbo?" Pieters coldly ignored both questions and questioner. At this they muttered together. "The kitchen," someone said—and a scuffle of feet moved away along the passage.

The man with the panga and the wide-brimmed hat leaned towards Pieters and smiled pleasantly. "We have a method with rats," he explained in a

conversational tone, cocking a slim pink thumb over his shoulder towards the kitchen.

Pieters said nothing; but he understood. In the last six months Klimbo had been captured by Mau Mau twice and under the threat of torture had partaken of the foul Ceremony of the Seven Cuts with its bestial drinking of human blood. Twice he had renounced his vows and returned to Pieters, and now it seemed that Mau Mau had lost patience.

From the kitchen came a noise, inhuman, brief, and Pieter's face twitched. Poor Klimbo. He had been a good boy, a clean honest boy. These thoughts stirred Pieters but he gave no sign even when he heard the main party returning along the passage.

Then the man with the panga touched him on the shoulder.

"Now we will complete our business, Bwana."

IN the darkness Captain Nicholson lay in the cane chair, relaxed. There was a creak from the door and the light of a torch cut across the room. He sat up.

"Sorry I woke you, sorr," said Delaney's voice. "I was just doing the 10 o'clock rounds. It's a quiet night. Nothing to report from the guards."

Stiffly, Nicholson got up. "Come in a minute, sergeant; I've been doing some figuring. Does anything about this room strike you as odd?"

"Odd, sorr?" Delaney flashed the torch around. "Not a thing."

"It's a soft room, isn't it? See what I mean—no sharp edges. Soft table, edges of the door . . ."

Delaney shone the torch. "Padded with leather. Yes, sorr—a strip down both edges. Every door in the house is the same."

"I suppose you can see the drift now," Nicholson said. "Pieters was blind—or almost blind. That explains a lot. A blind man wouldn't stand much chance against Mau Mau, would he? And from all accounts he was too proud and independent to go into town. When they came he couldn't escape and he couldn't fight back. Since he isn't here, dead along with his house-boy, there's only one other explanation. They must have taken him with them. Now, I wonder why."

"There might be several reasons," Delaney said, darkly, thinking of ant-hills and ceremonial blood-drinking.

Nicholson shook his head.

"No, it doesn't hang together; not in this case. They killed the boy, true, but that may have been to stop him talking. Or possibly they had a grudge against him. It seems to me that they came to collect Pieters. Everything points to it. They haven't smashed or fired the bungalow and there's no sign of looting. They came to get Pieters—to use him. And he was almost blind, remember. Now, what could a man like Pieters do that they couldn't?"

"Have you any ideas, sorr?" Delaney asked curiously.

Nicholson dropped back in the chair with a sigh. "Nothing worth a damn," he said. Then, "Have me awakened an hour before sun-up and have the men ready for a dawn start. Don't forget to get some sleep yourself. Good night."

THE cold dawn was filled with the clink of mess kits and the low talking of soldiers. Nicholson and Delaney stood near the trucks studying a field-map and planning which sweep to take. Both of them knew how much the element of luck entered into an operation of this type. Stalking Mau Mau across the open plains and into the forest was mostly a game of chance.

"We'll have to drive fast and take potluck," Nicholson said. "When we hit the Aberdares cliffs we'll turn north. They may be heading for one of the villages to hide-up, or possibly they'll dive into the jungle on the Aberdares. Without knowing why they've taken Pieters it's difficult to predict their movements."

"Perhaps they want him for one of them witchcraft orgies," Delaney suggested, not for the first time. He had seen some of the victims of Mau Mau and he looked upon the possibility of fresh horrors with a certain detachment.

In the Company Delaney had something of a reputation as a Mau Mau hunter. Some thought that he was over-quick on the trigger with difficult prisoners and that some day it would get him into serious trouble. Those that thought this were people who viewed the campaign from the paper jungles of Nairobi orderly-rooms. They were entitled to their view. Delaney, who had helped bury the houseboy Klimbo, felt himself entitled to his.

Nicholson looked at him, understanding his sergeant, and grinned a tight grin. "It could be," he admitted. "Let's go and find out."

As the six trucks rolled forward and took up convoy position, a gray herd of zebra stampeded before them and fanned away to the horizon. Nicholson, plotting the course in the lead truck, felt that the best plan was to zigzag due southeast. Before they had droned a mile, the first light had turned the plain into a pale yellow sea, and he saw with faint surprise that it was morning. Pieters, here we come, he thought grimly.

They ran southeast for four hours, zigzagging in four-mile steps but making no sort of human contact. When they stopped for a quick meal the blue wall of the Aberdares had come into plain view. Nicholson ate standing while he frowned over the map and compass readings and wondered if it was time to turn north. He glanced over at his troops who were smoking by the trucks, and at Sergeant Delaney who was helping the drivers to refuel from jerricans. Everyone looked gray with dust and the morning cheerfulness had worn off.



Nicholson folded the map and stowed it thoughtfully back in the case. If they failed to make contact to the north then Pieters was a cooked goose.

An hour later one of the truck tires blew out and they stopped to change the wheel. While the wheel was being changed, Nicholson wandered impatiently toward the next hillock. On the still air he could hear the voices of the repair squad mingled with the periodic *tink!* of a spanner. In the background was Sergeant Delaney's voice running through a useful range of adjectives. Delaney hated his Mau Mau hunting to be interrupted.

Nicholson reached the foot of the hillock and paused before pacing back. He glanced round and saw the sharp footprint of a leopard which had been stalking baboons on the rocks only 10 minutes before. Halfway back to the trucks he paused again, his eye running idly over the stony earth to a dark patch the size of a man's hand. He knelt and touched it, feeling its texture between his fingers. He fought down a rising exultation. Was this the break he needed?

"It's motor oil, all right," Delaney agreed when Nicholson fetched him. "Hard to say how old, sorr. Perhaps a week."

"A pity the ground's stony just here, and there are no tracks," Nicholson said. "Of course, it might be one of our own patrols."

Delaney frowned at the Aberdares and then looked down at the oil spot dubiously.

"They didn't use a truck to raid Pieter's place, but that doesn't prove they haven't got one," he said. "Just to clear the matter up I'll take a few of the boys and cast around. We might pick up the tracks."

They picked up more than the tracks. Half a mile away they came on a well-defined trail leading

back into the jungle. Delaney called his men off at once and sent a runner for Nicholson. Nicholson arrived at breakneck speed with the rest of the patrol. They drove the trucks as near as they could and left them when the euphoria trees became too thick. When Nicholson strode up, his eye running appraisingly over the indubitable trail going into the Aberdares, Delaney's face twisted into his ugly grin. He flicked the dust from the khaki-belt round his waist. "Should I take a party in after them, sorr?"

Nicholson laughed. They both laughed. Behind them the baboons ran barking over the hillock. At that moment all the hours of frustration and empty searching fell away and the day became suddenly pointed and full of meaning. The leopard lying up in the rocks heard the baboons go and snarled.

Nicholson looked at Delaney seriously. "Now you're just being bloody greedy," he said. "But I'll let you fire the second burst."

It was more than an hour later when the first bullet came *chinging* down on them like a mad hornet. The patrol instantly fell to left and right, bellying down into the undergrowth, and Delaney turned to flash a triumphant grin over his shoulder at Nicholson. Contact, Nicholson thought, grinning back. To confirm the idea, a second bullet hit a hardwood with a resonant pop.

While the patrol spread out and felt for the opposition, Nicholson looked at the terrain through the binoculars and saw that it was mostly open jungle with little cover. A hundred yards ahead of them was a line of black cliffs covered in scrub and vine. It appeared a damned difficult place to out-flank. Looking closer he saw a truck—probably the truck that had left the tell-tale oil-spots—parked at the foot of the cliffs, camouflaged with branches.

While he digested this fact a rifle started firing spasmodically from the cliffs ahead. There was no answering fire from the lower levels, and Nicholson grinned his appreciation. He had his patrol well-trained; they would wait till they had a target.

"Shall we set the mortar up?" Delaney asked, crawling beside him. Nicholson agreed; there was nothing like a mortar for softening-up, and if the growth got much thicker they would have no chance to use it. Along the cliffs was a shallow ravine—the very place to stage an assault. Delaney took a squinting look before crawling back to brief the mortar-crew.

A minute later the first shell crunched and flowered against the cliff-face—a near miss. The second one went into the ravine; and the third. Apart from a young bush-pig and two pigeons, the ravine showed no sign of being occupied. Nicholson decided to close in.

Slipping from tree-hole to tree-hole, soon they were up against the cliff and edging in on the

ravine. The mortar obediently threw a few shells over the top. Then they were in and going up over razor rocks and vines an inch thick. In a few moments they were on top.

Now the first bullets came from small tongues of flame at the edge of the jungle. The patrol ran from the gorge and fell into new positions. To Nicholson's left a soldier knelt on the stones and put his hand to his head then pitched forward with jerking limbs. Scrambling past, Nicholson shoved his .38 back in its holster and scooped up the dead man's sten gun. First blood to them, he thought, grinning savagely. But wait, you sons just wait!

The brief action waxed and waned through the trees. Firing rose to a crescendo, then died to nothing. Here and there little pitched battles were fought with snipers sitting tightly in the tree-tops. A few grenades exploded. At one point someone took half a dozen prisoners in one glorious swoop.

It was a hot, violent mix-up, yet the patrol moved forward inexorably—until suddenly, as they reached steeply sloping ground, there was a complete silence.

At the time Nicholson and Delaney were together. The silence shut down so unexpectedly that it had a balanced, brittle quality. They exchanged glances and waited for it to break, but it didn't. Delaney slipped away along the flank and after a moment came back.

"The devils have withdrawn, sorr." He gestured ahead up the rising ground, dense with bamboo and cedar jungle.

Nicholson nodded. He had half-expected this. At this stage there was only one thing to do: press on and press hard; cut them off before they reached the solid jungle on the upper slopes where pursuit was impossible.

But as the patrol crept up the strangely-silent rise, Nicholson felt a warning nerve twitch somewhere in his brain. You're getting jumpy, he told himself shortly; they're engaged and broken off—what else can they do now except fight and lose, or surrender? This was a reasonable, logical attitude, yet the warning nerve continued to twitch.

Finally Nicholson ignored it. What the hell, he thought, I'm going up after them!

THE patrol moved up in close formation. In this, Nicholson knew that he was taking a chance. But he relied on the probability that the Mau Mau would be in full retreat and would not waste any more men as snipers. And they would not have time to set booby traps.

Yet the distance he could hope to follow them was strictly limited. A recent order had made the Aberdares open territory and liable to R.A.F. bombing and ground-strafting. Without signaling his exact position, therefore, he would be running the risk of air-attack on any open ground they might

have to cross. In any case, beyond a certain point, pursuit was futile; the area was too big, the growth too thick.

Going forward at the head of the column, Nicholson had an acute presentiment of danger that refused to be ignored. When he lifted his hand sharply, the patrol scattered left and right behind the trees like birds. Instantly Delaney moved up beside him and they stood together listening and looking up the long and dark slope.

"It's a trap, sorr!" Delaney hissed suddenly.

Nicholson nodded. He had sensed that already. But what sort of a trap? A bunch of grenades didn't hurt well-scattered troops. A machine-gun would be awkward and so would two or three automatic rifles. Then what else? Was it plain bluff?

HE bent his head, listening. The jungle was like a giant sounding-board, amplifying and distorting every movement and its echo. From a long way off he could hear the cry of a leopard—a harsh unreal sound. Up in the trees some sort of bird was *chink, chink, chinking* monotonously, the metal notes reproducing themselves and whispering away as though in a cathedral.

Apart from that there was nothing except the soft breathing movements of the trees, nothing except the feeling of waiting, the atmosphere of expectancy that closed over Nicholson's skin like a cold nettle-rash.

Without speaking, he looked at Delaney, his eyebrows raised inquiringly.

Delaney shrugged slightly, hitching his sten tight under his arm-pit.

In a case like this, Nicholson thought, someone has to be the lamb on the altar. That means me. Who'd be a bloody officer anyway! They can always send the medal home to mother and hang it over my picture, he thought. That will be jolly to think about, if you *can* think—afterwards. In these few moments his lips seemed to have dried up to a salty smear. He felt his sten reassuringly and looked at Delaney with mocking eyes. He hoped Delaney would feel suitably impressed. On his own he went forward.

Farther up the slope the trees thinned, and then closed in to glossy evergreen thickets. The evergreens were the danger spot for sure. One foot slowly before the other, finger on trigger—and for God's sake keep your eyes skinned—he moved forward.

Nothing yet; not a sound.

He was now less than 50 yards from the evergreens. Still nothing. One more step. Nothing.

He paused, his hand half-raised to signal Delaney and the patrol to move up. And then, as he turned his head, he saw the movement, the blue oily barrel with the serrated cooling fins amongst the dense leaves, the black deadly mouth pointing at and beyond him down the slope towards the

patrol. In that fraction of an instant he dived forward like a swimmer, a warning yell bursting from his throat and his sten spraying an unaimed volley into the trees above.

The big Vickers machine-gun opened up at once. Nicholson could hear the *chug-chug-chug* of the heavy bullets passing over him and hitting the trees round the patrol.

Then a second machine-gun opened up, a third, and a fourth. These sounded like Brens or Brownings—it was hard to say which. For a moment he lay on his face in the soft under-tree mat until a spatter of bullets threw earth and fungus-dust over him. Frenzied, knowing it was his only chance, he dug, slaving sideways with his hands. It was a poor sort of fox-hole, but it stopped them drawing a direct bead on him.

WE'VE had it now, he thought: we've had it. They've got a fort—nothing less. He clawed a bit deeper, then twisted himself and cleaned the breach of the sten as best he could.

While he was doing this the Vickers stopped firing. He levered himself up, decayed vegetable matter all over his face, and gave it a burst with the sten.

Then the other machine-guns quieted—first one, then two. Silence crawled over the evergreens again, broken only by a few carefully aimed shots from his own patrol zipping up the slope. But there was no real weight of fire from his men down there; they were afraid of hitting him.

Silence again. Nicholson peered over the edge of his shallow fox-hole. Now what? Were they short of ammunition? That didn't make sense. By straining his eyes into the dense cover of the evergreens he could just make out the barrel of the Vickers. Vindictively he gave it a burst with the sten. Nothing happened.

Trying one more burst with the sten, he found that the magazine was empty. He pulled out his .38 and drew a careful bead with it on the Vickers. That shot hit metal and pinged upwards in a beautiful ricochet. There was no sign of enemy activity.

Nicholson lay low a minute to think. With their machine-guns apparently dead, the surprise element expended and the attacking patrol well-dispersed, it was hard to see what Mau Mau planned to do next. As Delaney and half a dozen others came up the slope, slipping from tree to tree, Nicholson saw what Mau Mau intended to do. Something climbed above the evergreens and he stared at it in wide-eyed disbelief. Then he laughed. He choked. It was an off-white shirt suspended on a long stick—the symbol of surrender.

They came out one by one, sheepishly, and allowed themselves to be cooped in a circle ringed with stens. Dressed in cast-off European clothes, some of them, or still in native Kikuya dress, they

appeared an evil, restless crowd. Every country has its scum, Nicholson thought, and this is Kenya's. He gazed at them with the indifference a soldier feels to a surrendered enemy, indifference mixed with a trace of contempt. Two men dead and two or three injured it had cost him for this little lot. They didn't look worth it.

Once the prisoners were safe, the first thing Nicholson did was break through the bushes to examine the machine-gun mounts. The whole business puzzled him. That they might have opened fire at long range with their last ammunition was illogical and stupid. Rather than question surly prisoners through an interpreter he went himself to find out. Close behind came the irrepressible Delaney, his eye bright for any lurking Mau Mau.

The gun-nests had been hacked out of the evergreens at intervals with enough forward clearance to command the slope. Nicholson shuddered at what he had been leading his patrol into. He touched the first gun—a Bren mounted on logs of wood. He tried the breech but it was jammed solid. That was interesting. Going to the next nest he saw that Delaney had preceded him and was struggling to free the belt of an old-type Vickers. This too was jammed.

AFTER a moment Delaney stood up, grinning. "The worst damn gun-stoppage I ever saw, sorr." On his palm he held a sliver of metal—it might have been the shank of a small nail. Amazed, Nicholson bent to look at it. The entire gun-belt, he then saw, had been sabotaged with tiny bits of metal cunningly inserted beneath the cartridges. No wonder the Vickers had stopped firing; it was a wonder it had ever fired at all. What sort of a mess was inside the breach was anybody's guess.

As they looked at each other, the same thought rose simultaneously to their minds—Pieters. Nicholson spun on his heel. "Take the side near the Vickers, Sergeant," he snapped. "If you find him fire one shot." He himself crushed away through the evergreens in the opposite direction until a shot, only a minute later, brought him stumbling back.

Delaney was standing at the top of a narrow clearing slashed out of the jungle. There were a few sleeping-shelters made from sticks and leaves. Scattered around were sundry ammunition boxes and a pile of assorted provisions—mostly native cereals. There was only the body of a man.

"Alive?" Nicholson asked, coming up.

"No, sorr."

Nicholson stooped and turned the body over.

It was a bearded white man, very old by the look of him; in his chest was a bad shot-wound. Nicholson searched the jacket and pants, but there were no identifying papers. Yet it was Pieters all right. A man like this was too distinctive to have a double.

From his own pocket he took a clean handker-

chief, gently laid it over the dead face, and then straightened, looking down thoughtfully. As he stared at this man lying here with his strong angular features and tough, spare body, the picture came into much sharper focus. For the first time he was thinking about Pieters without feeling irritated. Now he was dead, Pieters was at last beginning to emerge in his true stature.

"I still don't see what happened," Delaney admitted, puzzled. "He fixed their guns—sure, that's obvious—and a good thing for us that he did. But why did they bring him in the first place?"

Nicholson looked down again at the still figure. "Do you remember a Mau Mau raid a few months ago at Embu?" Delaney shook his head. How did you remember one particular raid amongst scores?

Nicholson smiled his slow crooked smile. "I remember it rather well, because I was there. They broke into the armory behind the native police barracks but found all the rifles chained up and the bolts removed and locked in a safe. So they stole what they could—four crates of machine-gun parts and a pile of ammunition. I know because I inspected the armory the next morning. After that I suppose they got the stuff away in a truck and brought it here. Then they discovered that machine-guns can be damned difficult things to assemble, so the next step was to capture and coerce someone with the necessary know-how. It looks as though the man they settled on was Pieters."

"But I thought he was blind," Delaney objected.

Nicholson looked at him musingly. "Sergeant. Could you still strip and assemble a Vickers?"

"I think so, sorr."

"Blindfolded?"

Delaney hesitated. "I might."

Nicholson shrugged. "Well, that answers your question. Don't forget that Pieters must have been a professional soldier for something like thirty years. They certainly picked the right man. Blind or half-blind, Pieters could do it and what he didn't remember he could guess. And being blind they knew he couldn't put up much resistance when they went to fetch him. Mau Mau never were technicians and Pieters must have been a gift from Heaven. He built the guns for them, with a panga at his throat, because he'd no option.

"Probably he clattered to them in their own lingo, talked them round, made them feel that he was mostly on their side. He knew what they were thinking and he knew how to turn their vanities and fancies to his own advantages. And when they relaxed he did his neat little job of sabotage. He was probably relying on the fact that they'd fire only one practice burst out of each gun, perhaps not even that. The bits of steel look as though they've been spaced to suit. But he made sure that there was enough metal in each belt and magazine

to jam the guns solid as soon as they were fired in earnest."

"And then they shot him?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Nicholson said. "Their bullet or ours—what's the odds. He died cleanly, like a soldier, and that's all that matters. In any case they'd never have let him leave this clearing alive, knowing what he'd done. We couldn't save his life—but at least we kept him from a slow death under the panga."

Then Nicholson remembered rank and duty.

"Sergeant!"

"Yes, sorr?"

"Have a grave dug right here and assemble a firing-party. Apart from guards all the patrol will parade by the grave in half an hour's time. We're going to give Pieters a send-off. Right?"

"Right, sorr."

THAT was almost the end of it. On a signal pad Nicholson wrote thoughtfully: "Company H.Q. from Nicholson, Captain, commanding 70 patrol. Enemy engaged in area PK 12. 39 prisoners taken with loss of 2 men dead, 4 injured. White resident Pieters killed during engagement. Am returning to base. Orders. End message."

After he had handed the message to an orderly, he sat on a crate. I know something, he thought. Old Pieters was nobody's fool. They said he was a recluse; that he'd gone native. Maybe he had; but he had a reason for it. He was an old man, growing quite blind, defenseless. But he knew Africa and the African mind and quite deliberately he allowed Africa to absorb him. To a large extent he identified himself with the common native. Perhaps that was the way he felt; perhaps he'd been kicked around by officials himself; or perhaps the whole thing was a pose, a defense mechanism. He'd seen what Mau Mau would do to harmless people like his houseboy, and when the time came he struck back in the most effective way that he could. How wonderfully effective it was he'll never know.

A short while later, Nicholson stood by the side of a shallow grave. He nodded; Delaney signaled; the firing party fired a ragged volley. Nicholson moved forward awkwardly and sprinkled some earth over the body; he muttered a few scraps of a psalm he remembered. Then the shovels were filling in the grave.

For a moment Nicholson watched them, and as he turned away he thought: I'd give a month's pay to have spoken to that man.

Before he reached the edge of the clearing a signal orderly came up with a signal reply-chit.

It said: "Nicholson, Captain, commanding 70 patrol from Company H.Q. Jolly good show. Carry on. The gin's on ice. End message."


Nicholson smiled grimly as he read it. Were there really such things he wondered, as civilized drinks in civilized glasses?

—BY F. W. HOLIDAY





# MEDICAL REPORT


By Lawrence Galton

 **TARTAR GETS BRUSH-OFF:** Most adults have tartar on their teeth. This flint-like deposit not only discolors teeth, but may irritate gums and cause pyorrhea and loss of teeth. Only way to get rid of it has been to have a dentist scrape it off. But soon you'll be able to brush it off.

Now being released to druggists, is the first solution to dissolve tartar and stains successfully without dissolving tooth enamel. Brushed on twice a day, it did the job for better than nine out of every 10 patients who tried it. So reports a University of Pennsylvania dental surgeon in the *Journal of Oral Surgery* (7:607).

 **SOUND-WAVE TREATMENT:** Ultrasonic therapy, using beams of sound waves beyond hearing, is being tested on many ailments. British doctors, who have tried it in 100,000 cases, for 28 different conditions, got best results for: lumbago, myalgia (muscle pains), contusions, skin inflammations, sciatica, arthritis and peri-arthritis (inflammation of tissues around a joint). Among patients with tennis elbow, Raynaud's disease and Buerger's disease, 60 to 70 percent were helped. The report appears in *British Journal of Physical Medicine* (17:97).

 **DETECTING LUNG CANCER:** One cheerful note in the blaring current alarm over lung cancer: They've just found that it takes much longer to develop than previously thought, and gives warning signs as early as nine years before full-fledged symptoms come on. As reported by University of Minnesota's Dr. Leo G. Rigler to the International College of Surgeons, the warnings take the form of faint shadows that show up on X-ray films. In the past, these went unnoticed or were not considered significant. Their early recognition now may well help to cut the death toll.

 **BURNING HANGOVER:** Some heavy drinkers get numb and tingling feelings that begin in fingers and toes, then creep up the arms and legs. After that, burning pain, tender muscles, skin discoloration and excessive sweating may develop. The trouble: alcoholic polyneuritis, or inflammation of nerves. Now vitamin B<sub>12</sub> has been found to offer quick relief. In every case in which


it was tried, including some with pain so severe that sleep was impossible, B<sub>12</sub> removed all symptoms in a few days, according to an *A.M.A. Journal* report (155:938).

## PINNING THE BLAME:

» **Salt** apparently plays a role in producing high blood pressure. People who sprinkle salt on lavishly, a recent study at Brookhaven National Laboratories indicates, are much more likely to get the condition than those who use salt sparingly or not at all.

» **Allergy to certain foods** may cause glaucoma, a blinding disease. A report in *Journal of Allergy* (25:356) tells of several people in whom the eye ailment was linked to diet and brought under control when they avoided particular foods.

» **Antibiotics** give some people diarrhea, mouth inflammations, skin outbreaks and other unpleasant effects. The reason may be that the drug interferes with the body's use of the vitamin, nicotinic acid. One doctor gave the vitamin in tablet form to a group of antibiotics sufferers and, as reported in *G.P.* (9:71), all got relief.

 **BRIEFS:** Stubborn urinary infections that resist antibiotics and sulfa drugs can often be knocked out by nitrofurantoin (*A.M.A. Journal* 155:1470) . . . Leg pains produced by blood-vessel diseases have been ended by histamine, a chemical that dilates the vessels, promotes better circulation. Patients previously unable to walk or even threatened with amputation have returned to jobs (*A.M.A. Journal* 155:1559) . . . Cheering news if you have an ulcer: Odds now are 20 to 1 that it will never bleed; 3 to 1 that if it does the hemorrhage will not be severe; and 10 to 1 that even if severe bleeding occurs it will not kill (*N. Y. State Journal of Medicine* 53:2187) . . . New gauze dressing put out by Bauer & Black won't stick to healing wounds, can be pulled off with no pain and no injury to wound . . . With newest rehabilitation techniques, even a paralyzed amputee can beat his double handicap and learn to walk again, if he has a strong enough desire plus the help of his family (*A.M.A. Journal* 155:1463) . . . Aspirin is as effective as cortisone in early rheumatoid arthritis (*British Medical Journal* 1:1223).

Like all medical advances, those reported here are not 100 percent cure-all. Only your doctor is qualified to judge whether a new development may help in your own particular case. For further advice, see him.

# man around the house...

BY  
JOHN SHARNIK

***Got an extra doorway at your place, located in just the wrong spot? Here are some ideas on how you can turn it into an asset.***

THE DOORWAYS in most older houses, I'm convinced, were placed by blind builders relying on the guidance of witchhazel rods. Not only are there likely to be too many doorways, but they always seem to be located in exactly the wrong place.

What can a guy do with an extra, mislocated doorway?

Well, you can always stud it in and plaster it over. But ripping out the door-frame is apt to take a few chunks of wall with it, and the final result can look awful patchy.

An enterprising amateur in my neighborhood, unwilling to settle for this sort of makeshift, came up with a scheme that not only solved the problem without disturbing a door-frame, but at the same time added valuable closet and drawer space to three different rooms in his house. It may give you an idea for an unexpected way around a similar problem in your own mortgaged castle.

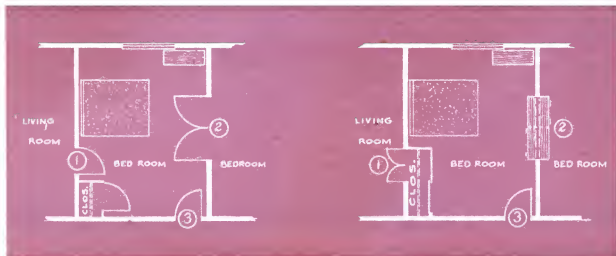
What the man had, to begin with, was a small bedroom with three doorways. The first doorway, for no apparent reason, connected the bedroom with the living room. This resulted in an occasional awkward intrusion while the lady of the house was performing that final tug of the girdle before going out to receive guests, and also gave the neighborhood small fry an extra means of disturbing Sunday-morning sleep. The double doorway—purpose likewise ob-

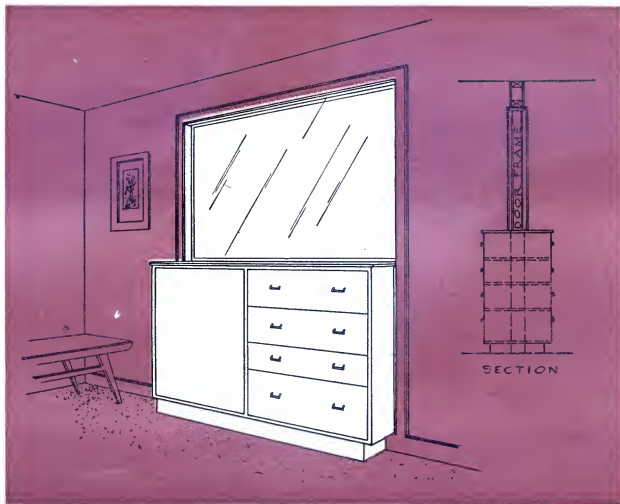
scure—led into another bedroom. The third doorway, connecting with hall and bathroom, was the only one that made any sense.

No. 3 was left alone. But as shown in our sketch, doorway No. 1 became the entry to a much-needed enlarged closet. The one bulky door itself was replaced by a pair of ¾-inch plywood cupboard-type doors—the narrower width cuts out less floor space and wall space. This made the closet usable from the living-room side for guests' coats. And instead of a solid back wall, the same closet got a pair of sliding doors, which make the closet also usable from the bedroom side.

Double doorway No. 2 was filled in by a pair of inexpensive unpainted four-foot-high dressers from a local department store. But—a neat gimmick—one dresser faces into one bedroom, and the other, placed square alongside it, faces into the other bedroom. The space above, between dresser tops and top of doorframe, was filled in by a sheet of plywood—covered by a mirror in one bedroom and with a cork surface to use as a bulletin board in the other.

The guy's so pleased with his ingenuity that he keeps looking around the house for more spare doors. His wife figures it's only a matter of time before he has the family boxed out of the joint completely.





**ANOTHER WAY OUT.** Sometimes even a door that's needed gets to be a bother because its swing takes too much space out of a room. Happens most often in small kitchens, where, for example, you can have trouble placing a refrigerator because its door conflicts with the swing of a door into the dining room or back hall. In that case, consider a sliding door—one that disappears right into the wall. Kennatrack Corporation (address for information: Elkhart, Indiana) now puts out a completely packaged prefabricated frame, with hardware, for creating a disappearing door. Accommodating any standard door, it costs from around \$27 to about \$36, depending on the size of door to be used and on type of hardware preferred.

**WHAT ELSE IS NEW.** On the same subject, if you're replacing an old beat-up hinged door or installing one in, say, a newly finished-off attic room, you'll be interested in a new kind that's bound to fit right and hang straight. It's the Jackstite Door unit—a door that comes pre-hung in its jamb, is self-leveling and self-adjusting by the tightening of a couple of screws. No edge-planing or hinge-shimming required. Installation time, the manufacturer says, is "22 minutes for the poorest workman." (I keep wondering how they found this titleholder. Probably had some sort of elimination tournament, the way the heavyweights did after Joe

Louis retired.) Price of the unit, with birch or mahogany door, is around \$30 complete. Write Young Wood Products Co., 4520 Grand River Ave., Novi, Michigan for source in your area.

**Any homeowner** who's fuming these days over that old problem of not enough electric outlets in a room is a little behind the times. New solution is a plug-in raceway, or continuous outlet. It's a narrow metal housing fastened to the wall along the top of the baseboard, that runs all around the room, or as much of it as you like, with a plug-in every 30 inches. Costs around \$1 a foot, installed. (Consult an electrical contractor in your town or write to the Wiremold Company, Hartford, Connecticut.)

**Cheap short-cut** for finishing a floor for basement recreation room or terrace: Instead of tiling or flagstoning, scatter a few pounds of a powdered color pigment—compounded especially for concrete—into a freshly-laid concrete topping, then just trowel in the pigment and let it dry. The system, producing a floor in almost any desired color, was developed for stores and hospitals, is now being used by architects for homes. Cost: around nine cents a square foot. (Information from A. C. Horn Company, Inc., 10th Street and 44th Avenue, Long Island City 1, N. Y.)

**A man who learned how to  
handle his children—after they had grown up—  
frankly tells the mistakes he made, and  
how he could have avoided them.**

**E**VER BEEN SCARED of your own daughter? Ever swallow and stiffen up when she plops herself down in your lap?

Ever get careful, painfully careful, where you put your hands when you hug her? Or decide it's better not to hug her at all?

I have.

When they were 11, my twin daughters began to develop, as little girls have a way of doing, into women. Angles began to change into curves. Breasts began to fill out—something they were immensely proud of, something they had been waiting a long time for.

Far earlier than this, though, I was already in retreat. Even at six or seven, when Janet and Anne were cuddly cherubs just starting to grow legs and pigtails, I wasn't quite comfortable holding them on my lap any more. I still loved 'em just as much, of course, but my damned defenses started to build up.

And now, with two young ladies around—at least they were young ladies part of the time—I was really scared to death. In the back of my mind I kept remembering what I'd read about the "Oedipus complex," worrying about them getting a fixation on their Dad and being unable to transfer their love to the boy friends when they would finally have some, and all that.

I have a notion, too, that what happened to me happens to a lot of other fathers. And so, while I'm going to lay the cards out—frankly set down the mistakes I made with my daughters—I'm also hop-

ing to look at a father-daughter relationship that makes sense.

I am sure I started my little girls off in the right way, like most fathers do. I mean I was crazy about them, and it was easy to show it. From the beginning, I thought they were the cutest pair that were ever born. So I wasn't remote at all. I loved to hold them.

I was in on the daily routine, too, which helped. I wasn't a stranger. I took turns with my wife, getting up for the night feedings. And if you think giving two bottles of milk at the same time to two babies isn't a chore, try it some time!

It happened that they were born in the era when pediatricians knew more about a baby's needs than the baby did. So the twins were put on a rigid feeding schedule, every three hours, and we stuck valiantly to that schedule, whether they howled or not. I'm sure they weren't too happy about it, for the way I figure it, if a baby is hungry and isn't fed, or isn't hungry and *is* fed, it feels to him like nobody loves him.

As if this wasn't enough, we went through a month or so of deep concern over Anne's thumb-sucking. We tried all manner of medieval devices, from thumb guards to arm splints, to break her of the "habit." Finally somebody had sense enough to tell us that it wouldn't hurt her if she *did* suck her thumb. She just needed more sucking. Why don't parents trust some of their own feelings about raising children, anyway?

**BY FLETCHER D. SLATER\***

# I was afraid

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\*In consultation with Dr. G. Alexander Young, Jr., eminent Omaha psychosomaticist and counselor.



PHOTO BY JAMES SNYDER

of my daughter...

In the main, though, I did all right, the first four or five years. I loved 'em and I showed it, most of the time. And I didn't claim them exclusively as mine, just because they were little girls and there was supposed to be a special bond between us.

I think, on looking back, that the so-called Oedipal phase in a child's life is hogwash. Or it *can* be hogwash, even if it often isn't.

Most of the textbooks on child psychology include it as a normal phase of development, something that must be gone through, like teething or adolescence. It's named, you remember, from the Greek myth, and stands for an excessive love of daughter for father, or son for mother. Well, I'm quite sure the twins loved both of us about equally.

I have a friend, too, who says "Rot!" to the Oedipus stuff. From their daughter's cradle days, he and his wife have both loved their little girl unreservedly. And all through her life, she has never shown a marked preference for either. In fact, even in the midst of the "Oedipal" period, when she'd see her mother and father kissing on the sofa, she would pipe, "Hey, wait for me!" and would bounce over and make it a three-way kiss.

We had something of the same experience, and I'll challenge to the teeth any psychologist who says that the Oedipal phase is a "must" in a child's development. It is strictly man-made, caused by needs in many fathers to have female attention; if they can't get attention from their wife, they'll get it from their daughter.

### How to Make Your Wife Mad

Discipline was another rock I stubbed my toe on. I shoved more and more of it onto their mother. You see, it just wasn't fun to tell the twins where to head in. They were little girls; Eleanore could do a much better job of it than I (so I said). Besides, we wanted them to grow up learning to help around the house. Eleanore was the logical supervisor for housework, and the one to punish if jobs weren't done.

That's a comfortable out, men—but I found that it was shortsighted. For one thing, it made my wife damned mad at me. I got the gravy—the love, the admiration, the playing with. She got the dirty work—the discipline, the punishment, the instruction. I realize, now, it wasn't in my own best self-interest to leave all that to Eleanore.

I had lots of fun with the twins when they were growing up. We'd play "Red Light" and "Hide and Go Seek" and "Statue." We got a swing, bar and trapeze set for the back yard (I'd always wanted one), and we had hours of fun with that. I roller-skated with them, and we even made a game out of having Sunday School at home, when we couldn't go to the one at church.

But even when they were little girls, I made a mistake that has hounded me, and them, all the rest of the time: I wouldn't let them show anger.

When they were in kindergarten, they were invited to a birthday party, Saturday afternoon. They were entranced by the idea. Some other little folks were to stop by on the way and pick them up.

After lunch Saturday, I glanced into their room, where they slept in double-deckers. There was a standing ultimatum—I suspect kids hate ultimatums as much as grownups do—that they keep their room somewhat picked up. I saw that the place was a shambles.

"You pick up your room before you go," I told them, not once, but several times, before party time. They didn't get around to it.

Finally, the friends came by. The room still was cyclonic. Firmly, I said, "You don't go till your room is picked up."

Janet exploded. "Oh, Daddy!" I was horrified at her look of hate and anger.

I disliked discipline, but this touched me on the raw. "Don't ever speak to your father like that!" I said. And, of course, what I meant was, "Don't ever express anger."

### Clever Little Rascals

I was expecting the impossible. Little children just do have anger, whenever they are crossed in what they want to do. And if they aren't allowed to express that anger, if they're made to feel guilty for having it, it becomes subconscious anger, and finds an outlet in some subconscious way.

Kids are intuitively very clever. I'm quite sure that the twins expressed their anger at me by just *not* picking up their room. Because it's always been an issue in our house. They explained it in many different ways: "I just don't have time." "I meant to, but I forgot." "Why, I worked on it a whole half hour!" Subconsciously, though, they were saying, "Nuts to you!"

I didn't know any better, you see, than to try to bottle up their natural feelings. I know better, now, but it's a little late. The twins are now 19. One's a sophomore in college, and the other is married. And while they're both wonderful kids, I'm certain that some of the anger I helped push under long ago are still working out in oblique, unwitting ways.

For example, when I started being afraid to show my affection for them, naturally it felt to them as if I didn't like them as well. The language of the body, as Dr. G. Alexander Young says, is eloquent—far more eloquent than words. And when I shied away from hugging and kissing and holding them on my lap, they must have felt as if I didn't like their naturally warm, affectionate selves. Unconsciously, that must have given them feelings of resentment toward me, which of course they couldn't express or even feel, consciously.

But I got told off, one way or another. All during their growing-up period, I felt a strong need to duplicate in the twins my own abhorrence of



liquor. My grandfather died of drink, and my Dad had a fanatical fear of it, which he passed on to me.

But the odd thing is, now that Anne is in college, she is imbibing along with the college crowd, in spite of (or because of) her carefully wrought convictions that it was a senseless, expensive thing to do. I think she's doing it out of subconscious rebellion, chiefly—her angers that she could never express directly at me are working out in doing something she knows I felt strongly about. It makes no difference to her subconscious that I have changed somewhat in my attitude toward liquor. With her little-girl self she is still saying, "Nuts to you, Pop!"

How much wiser it would have been if I had been able, when a twin blew her top against me or Eleanore, to have said, "I know exactly how you feel, honey. You're madder than hops, and I don't blame you. I would be, too."

And then re-examined the cause of the anger. For so often it happens that the kids' anger is justified. Maybe it *wasn't* too important that their room be always picked up; maybe we were demanding adult behavior from five-year-olds, which simply isn't reasonable.

But when I took the stand, of course, I couldn't backtrack, or act human. Funny how hard it is to apologize to a child. I had to keep on saying that anger was bad. Well, it was, in my own childhood. Anger was never allowed in our old home.

So it's the unforgivable sin to me, or it was until I began to get some sense. My wife is more fortunate; she can tear off her mad at me, and almost enjoy doing it. But when the storm is over, everything's all right.

But not me. I just clam up. That's been my

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## make it easy

When the stiff tip of your shoelace breaks or comes off, making threading through small holes difficult, wind a one-inch strip of cellulose tape around the frayed end, and press to the point.

—Paul Erdokimo, Nelson, B. C., Canada.

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pattern. The doc tells me, too, that's almost certainly why I've been having migraine headaches off and on all my life. I've been deeply angry, and didn't even know it.

When I began, almost literally, to push my daughters off my lap, it was because of a feeling of anxiety when we were close—physically close, I mean. Anxiety is an *irrational* fear. Actually, there was no real danger of me having incest with my daughters.

But because of the rigid shunning of all things sexual and warm during my youth—we didn't even

kiss in our family when I was growing up—I *felt* uneasy. I felt being demonstrative to the twins *wasn't* quite right.

You see, I put my own fears into them, and imagined they would think it odd that I liked to hold them. I could see other fathers begin treating their daughters with a sort of courteous respect, too. What I didn't realize was that they were off the beam as far as I was. They'd been reading the same book, had been brought up in the same neurotic society.

## The Subconscious Is an Elephant

One strong ray of hope shines in this rather cheerless retrospect for me: Psychiatrists stress that most repressions occur before five. During that period, children are *totally* dependent on their parents for survival. So if Pop says, often and strongly, "No!" "Bad!" "Naughty!" to his small daughter's natural wishes and feelings, she interprets that as if he said, "If you have these feelings, I won't love you." As a result, she denies her "bad" and "naughty" feelings and they become what the experts call "repressed."

But the subconscious never forgets. The denied wish or feeling keeps struggling for expression. If it doesn't work out directly, it does indirectly. Businessmen's angers and fears often work out in ulcers; subconsciously, being sick gets them the love and attention they have been deprived of as children, the lack of which has made them so deeply angry. For the same reason, other people have arthritis, sinus trouble, asthma, bad hearts, stomach trouble or female complaints.

Anne is expressing it in having a beer with the gang. Janet got married before we thought she was old enough. I'm not saying these are *solely* a way of working out anger; motives, even subconscious ones, are seldom unmixed. But I think their unwitting, hostile feelings, never expressed, play a large part.

The daughter of a doctor friend of mine was a baby during the war years, when he had to be away from home. What it *felt* like to her was desertion. He tried hard to make it up, when he got back, but for four whole years he had been gone. Of course there was never any conscious knowledge of anger at him—he's been a "good father"—but underneath she's hostile as all get-out.

Oddly enough, results may be widely different. One child, on getting older, may find all affection and warmth uncomfortable. She may become a grind, and have trouble getting interested in boys.

Or another, out of rebellion, may some day let go with the old, repressed wishes to be cozy, and go overboard with boys. That's often the story behind the campus good-time Sally, and the compulsive prostitute.

Well, what can a poor father do, when he finds out about all this after his little girl's grown up?

First, reverse the trend toward hiding the real

feelings. Even if it's hard at first, express affection in body language, as well as in words. A good, warm hug and a kiss, a hand on the shoulder, help a lot. And it's never too late to start.

Second, give your daughter a glimpse of what went on earlier. The chances are if you don't tell her, she'll never know. Frankly admit your mistakes, and let her look, consciously, at the little-girl parts of herself you know must be there, even if they are unknown to her.

You might say to her something like what I'm saying to mine, even at this late date:

"You know, honey, I made some big blunders when you were growing up. I didn't mean to; I just didn't know my way around. But I quit showing you I loved you, just because you were getting to be a young lady, and I wasn't comfortable with young ladies. Maybe I made you feel it wasn't good to show love. Well, I was wrong. It is good.

"And I'll bet you got mad at me lots of times, but didn't even know it. Well, I used to get mad at my father, mad enough to kill him. Remember that time in kindergarten you had to pick up your room before you could go to the birthday party? You got mad enough at me to hit me, and I said you mustn't ever get mad. I was wrong there, too. It's all right to get mad, as long as you don't clobber somebody."

#### What Silence May Mean

You know, talk is a fine thing. I realize that I just didn't talk enough with my kids. Habitual silence is a numbing sort of rejection, really. It says, louder than words, "I don't really love you. I don't enjoy your company. I like myself and my own thoughts far better than I like exchanging thoughts and feelings with you."

One of the most uncomfortable moments I ever had was when Janet, then 15, said to me out of a clear sky at the dinner table, "Daddy, when I think of Heaven I think of you. If anybody's in Heaven, you'll be there."

It made me uncomfortable because it wasn't true. She had a picture of me that had a false front on it. Furthermore, it was her conscious picture, not her subconscious one. She felt I was all-good, all-wise. And I just wasn't.

More, underneath that subconscious ideal of me, she had unrecognized angers. I can see them more plainly now, since she's married. She's much closer to her mother, in spite of her disciplining, than she is to me. For Eleanor, though she sometimes "rode" the twins, was always loving and always there and always communicating. Too often, as they got older, I pushed them away, by silence, absence or just plain being uncomfortable with affection.

One mistake in the list, though, I didn't make—overdoing the "pal" relationship with my daughters. For it can be overdone. Children, especially when they get into adolescence, like to run with

their own crowd. The old reliance on Dad fades, hard as that may be to take.

Adolescence is admittedly a hard time on the adolescents. It is also rough on parents, especially on the father who sees his darling growing up and away from him, and straight into the arms of some young punk who can't possibly appreciate her.

It feels good for me to get these things off my chest. But if they're to be helpful to you other guys with daughters, maybe I'd better jot down, here at the end, the things that seem to me to make sense, from my own experience:

1. All her life, your daughter needs and wants your love. Keep telling her and showing her. A hug is worth 10 hikes in allowance.

2. Don't get scared by your own warm feelings toward your daughter. Just enjoy 'em. She'll be far better prepared for a good marriage if she had a warm, loving relationship with her Dad.

3. Take as much of a hand as you can in raising your daughter. And don't hog all the fun parts to yourself. You'll get more love from your wife if you take some of the drab, routine stuff off her hands.

4. Give your daughter the dignity of her feelings. Realize that she won't love you 100 percent. *Let her hate you* when you don't make sense to her. Let her express anger. She'll love you all the more.

5. Don't overdo the pal stuff when she wants to be with kids of her own age. But remember, she always likes you to be around. It makes her feel secure.

6. A girl grows and unfolds. Don't load her down with duties and responsibilities beyond her years, but let her have more freedom as she needs it.

7. Be man enough to apologize and backtrack when you've made a mistake. You'll flop, as I did, so don't try to play God.

8. Talk to your daughter. Try to be articulate. She will love you better if she learns what's in hurt. The worst thing is clamping up into a hush, noble silence. Anything can be reasoned out together, if you'll just talk.

9. Realize that your daughter will not have an excluding, Oedipal love for you if you encourage her to love her mother, too, and try to make it a three-way deal.

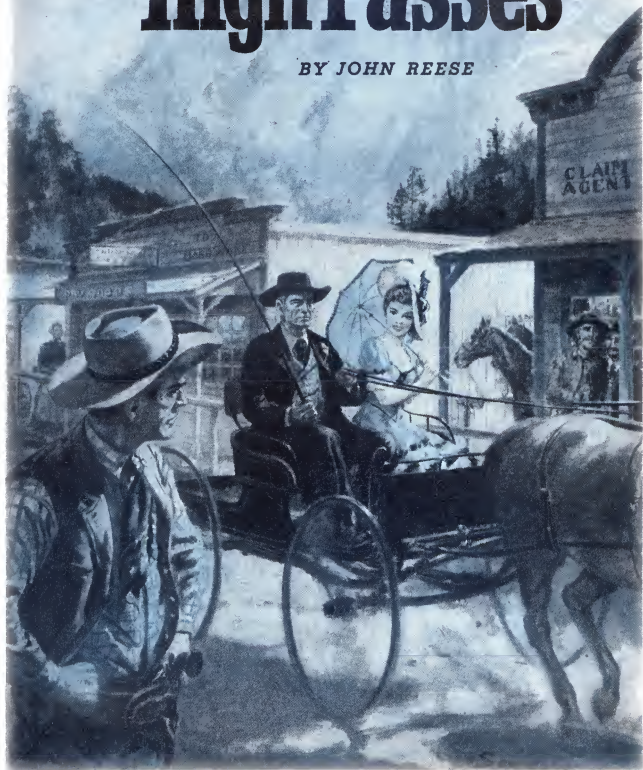
I know I haven't said a thing about hours of going to bed, and dates, and having the car, and a lot of other things that often loom large in a father-daughter relationship. There's no answer, except the one you work out with her. And you'll work it out if you accept her as a reasonable human being who wants, above all things, love and affection and security in her mother—and her dad.

—BY FLETCHER D. SLATER

A BLUEBOOK COMPLETE NOVEL

# The High Passes

BY JOHN REESE



# The High Passes



BY JOHN REESE

Young Wayne Staples rode back West resolved to stay peaceful. But with outsized neighbors poaching on his winter range, a down-at-heels gunslick snarling for his blood, and his father feuding crazily over a creamy actress, how could a man keep calm?

THEY CAME DOWN OUT of the steep canyon onto a mountain meadow where tawny grass sparkled between the live oaks in bright morning sunlight. The autumn chill of the canyon shadows vanished. Wayne Staples hung the halter-rope of the pack-horse over its saddle and turned the animal loose. It knew it was nearing home. It broke into a run, its tall load teetering awkwardly, and vanished into the gaudy foliage below the meadow.

Behind Wayne one of the two riders said, "Your pa won't like that. He never lets a pack-horse run loose."

Wayne hitched himself around in the saddle. "Lots of things Pa will have to get used to, Jud. When I do a job, I do it my way."

He pointed his horse down the worn, wide trail over which his father had driven Sliding S herds to winter range for nearly 30 years. Jack Staples had said he sure to bring Jud and Chuck home with him. Let the others go, said Jack, but Jud and Chuck were the pick of the crew and good men were scarce up here after the first frost.

Well, he was bringing them home. They had given him an argument when he paid the others off in Sacramento, after turning the herd into winter range down there. But Wayne had proved at Turnpike Soldiers College, down on Tidewater, that he had the knack of handling men. He was

23. Jud and Chuck were almost twice that, but that thing his old instructors at Turnpike called "the gift of command" made the difference. He was bringing them home.

That gift had come down from Wayne's father. So had his wiry health and straight brown hair and stubborn jaw. He was just under medium height, like his father, but supple and muscular where Jack had a grizzly-bear burliness. His mouth and nose and gray eyes were his father's too.

But his thoughts were like his dead mother's, and so was his way of talking. At Turnpike, where most of the grizzled old instructors had fought under Lee in the War Between the States, Wayne's accent had sounded broadly Western. Here in the Sierra Nevada he sounded like a raw tenderfoot. His mother's people, the MacAndrews—or the few that were left back East—thought Wayne too curt and direct, a little uncouth. Jack Staples, the father Wayne was just learning to know again, called him a mama's boy. In school in Europe, as a kid, Wayne had been "that odd American boy." Here in his homeland he felt like an alien.

"Sacramento's sure a good winter town," Jud sighed.

"Too many people think so," said Chuck. "No jobs. I dunno, I'm glad I come back. It'll be good to be home. . . . Won't it, Wayne?"

"Yes," Wayne said shortly.

Home. This was his second homecoming in a little over two months. Sixteen years ago, a child of seven, he had left Black Bear Valley with his mother, when his parents separated. He had grown up down in Santa Barbara, on the Coast, in the MacAndrews house; and in England and Switzerland and France. His mother had been a beautiful woman, noted for her grace and sweet dignity. And it was a graceful, dignified life she had led. But if Wayne had never lacked for anything, as he grew up, he could thank his father.

Jack Staples had been generous. Only one thing had he denied his son. As long as Wayne could remember he had wanted to be a doctor. There Jack drew the line. But if Wayne could not have his way, neither would he go back home and work for his father on the Sliding S. They had compromised on Turnpike, a Distinguished School for Young Gentlemen—appointments limited, tuition exorbitant.

There Wayne had restlessly put in his time, until his beautiful and (he thought privately) somewhat irresponsible mother died last spring. He had resigned from school at once. He did not know what he wanted to do, but he was sure he did not want to be an Army officer or marry the sisters of any of the Young Gentlemen at Turnpike.

Then came his father's letter:

*I never tried to take you away from her while your mother was alive, but a boy belongs with his father and a man belongs where his money comes from. I'm an old man now—sixty-four—and I need you. This property will all be yours and you don't even no how to run it....*

Two months ago Wayne had returned to the mountains he barely remembered, aching not so much with loneliness for his mother but with regret that he had not really known her.

Home? Even less did he remember the huge log house in the aspen grove, overshadowed by the looming perpendicular walls of the canyon. This was the Eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. The State line was only a few miles to the east. For years old Jack had thought he lived in Nevada, until a recent Army survey had located all of Black Bear Valley in California.

It was a wild country, beautiful despite the raw scars where men had gophered into the side of the mountains in the gold rush 30 years ago. Whole towns had been built overnight. In a few years most of their buildings had been abandoned and torn down or moved to the thriving mining towns that still existed in Nevada. Only a few mines still operated here. A few sawmills remained but most of them had also moved east to cut timbers for the Nevada diggings. Here and there, in little sheltered canyons, were the cabins of small farmers and trappers and prospectors, queer hermit-like folk

who wanted only to be left alone and who, after 30 years of disappointment, still were sure that next year—next year sure!—they would find the mother lode.

A picket fence of towering 10,000- and 12,000-foot peaks surrounded the valley. The Sliding S house set at an elevation of a little over 6,500 feet, the white-stemmed aspens almost hiding the city of sheds and corrals and haystacks that filled the wide sheltered canyon. The scope of his father's operations and the casual way he ran this vast business had taken Wayne's breath.

In the winter, the 9,000-foot pass that connected the valley with the warm western slope was closed by snow, and even access to Nevada was closed periodically by blizzards. Every fall about half of the Sliding S herds were driven down to the foothills near Sacramento, where old Jack Staples had cannily bought thousands of acres while land was cheap. Meanwhile he hired all the men he could get—hundreds of them—and put them to mowing the sweet mountain hay and stacking it in the canyons which had protection from the worst of the winter blizzards. Here, behind stout stone fences laboriously built when the big mines first shut down and labor was cheap, the other half of the Sliding S herds rode out the fierce mountain winter.

To fatten cattle here during the summer was easy, but there were only a limited number of these "winter meadows." That much Wayne had learned in the five weeks he had to get acquainted with his father, before Jack Staples sent him through the pass in charge of the last of the winter drives. He was on his way back now, and he wanted to see the look on Jack Staples' face when he came riding in with Jud and Chuck.

They emerged on another sunny slope, and at the foot of it they saw a big man on a handsome sorrel horse, holding their packhorse. The man was almost as sorrel as his mount, a beefy, brawny young giant Wayne's own age, with blue eyes and short, curly yellow beard covering his heavy jaws.

He handed over the halter-rope of the packhorse. "It's a good thing old man Staples didn't catch you lettin' a packhorse run loose," he said. "He'd just as soon kick you off the place as not, for that."

Wayne took the halter-rope and put out his hand. "I doubt if he'll kick me off, Dutch," he said. "How are you? Last time I saw you, you spilled buttermilk on your shirt."

The big man's face was foolish with amazement for a moment. Then he clamped down strongly on Wayne's hand.

"Wayne—Wayne Staples!" he shouted. "Floyd and Earl said they seen you. They said you was a

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Illustrated by NORMAN SAUNDERS

runt and they shore spoke the truth! How much you weigh?"

"About one seventy-five," Wayne said, smiling.

Jack Staples and Chet Orrindorf had come through the high passes in search of gold 35 years ago, at the end of that massive stampede which made California. They had not found gold but neither had they limped home broke. Jack Staples had brought the first trail-herd through the pass, to butcher for rich and hungry miners. They paid him four dollars a pound for beef that had cost him 20 a head on the Coast. Jack was a single man. Chet Orrindorf had a wife and two sons back in Ohio. They were cattlemen by nature, and where others searched only for gold under the soil, these two saw the rich grass on top of it.

There were now five Sliding S beeves to every two wearing the Orrindorf CO brand. Jack Staples had a strong instinct to acquire and possess. Chet Orrindorf was comfortably well-off; Jack Staples was a wealthy man.

Wayne had run into the two older Orrindorf boys, Earl and Floyd, before leaving for Sacramento with the trail-herd. They were older men, and he had only dim and not very happy memories of being bullied by them as a child. He remembered Dutch more clearly; Dutch's real name came to him suddenly, and he hid a smile, remembering how this youngest Orrindorf had hated it: Clarence.

"Where's your gun?" Dutch asked.

"What gun?"

"Don't you pack a gun?" cried the amazed Dutch. "Hey, is it true what Floyd said—that you don't believe in fightin'?"

"I don't know what I believe," Wayne said. "In a way, I guess it is. It's not a crusade, Dutch. I don't care what other people do. It's only—"

"You're scairt?" Dutch said, gaping at him.

"No, I don't think so."

Dutch burst out, "You are too! Ain't no man would talk thataway unless he was scairt. Your pa said you was a mama's boy and you are!"

"There's no call for that kind of talk, Dutch," he said quietly.

"You're scairt!" Dutch shouted at him. "You're a runt and a mama's boy! I could spank you like a baby."

"I've whipped my share of heavyweights—better men than you, I think," Wayne said.

Dutch dropped to the ground and pushed his tall sorrel horse aside. "No man your size can talk to me thataway! Get down. Get down or I'll pull you down!"

It was no use. Wayne was hungry and tired and anxious to be home, but he slid out of the saddle and handed his reins to Jud. The pack-horse, free once more, resumed its pell-mell flight down the slope to home.

Dutch came at him as though to overpower him by sheer weight. Wayne slid aside easily and stepped inside the thick, groping arms and drove

both fists into Dutch's stomach. Dutch's arms came down and Wayne circled him and rapped him on the jaw and temples.

It was a textbook situation and he fought it the way he had been taught to fight. Dutch rushed him again and again and Wayne sidestepped and hooked as Dutch floundered past him. He caught the big man off balance and moved in with his own chin tucked safely into his shoulder and cut him down little by little.

It was easy but it took time. He had to drop Dutch three times before he stayed down. The big fellow lay there on his stomach in the trampled grass, choking for breath, trying to shake the fog out of his puzzled head. Wayne took his arms and hoisted him to his feet.

"See what I mean, Dutch?" he said. "What does it prove? We're right back where we started."

Dutch blinked at him and said thickly, "Let me get my hands on you onest, that's all! This don't end it, Staples."

"Suit yourself," Wayne said.

Dutch stumbled to his horse. The big sorrel stood still as a rock while Dutch pulled himself into the saddle. He sat swaying in the saddle, flushed and beaten and bewildered.

"You always was so high and mighty!" he said. "You and your biggity ideas! Well, wait till you get home and see your old fool of a pa! I wish I could be there! You won't dare to show your face."

He turned the sorrel and went loping away, reeling a little in the saddle at first, stiffening as he went out of sight among the trees. Wayne turned to Jud and Chuck.

"Now, what did he mean by that?"

"If I could fight like that, I'd lick somebody every Saturday just for the hell of it," Jud said.

Wayne got up into the saddle. "If it's fun for you, why not?" he said. "I just don't see any sense to it, personally."

For the first time, Jud and Chuck liked him. He could fight. Jud rode up beside him and studied Wayne a moment.

"You claim you want to stay out of trouble."

"If I can," Wayne said.

"Look at it this way, kid. When word gets out that a man can handle himself the way you can, and still don't like it—seems to me everybody's goin' to choose him. Wouldn't it be smarter to let on that you like to fight?"

"Put it this way," Wayne said. "Were you ever held up at the point of a gun? Did you ever have to stand there and let some man put his hand into your pocket whether you liked it or not? Didn't it grate on you?"

"Yes, but—"

"That's how I feel when I'm pushed into a senseless fight. What other people think of you can be as unreasonable a form of coercion as a gun. I'm just not putting up my hands any more when I'm told to, that's all. I do as I please."



The trail dipped into another steep canyon threaded by another foaming creek. The forest silence was broken sharply as, ahead of them, a sentry beaver rapped a warning with his flat tail on the water. They passed the elaborate dam and began climbing. Above the dam was an old, ruined mine, stripped of its timbers by the thrifty beavers. Only the rotten sills of the old cabin remained.

They crossed a last ridge and Black Bear Valley opened below them, an empire of crisscrossed canyons and rich meadows and stony peaks. In a little while they came down to a fork in the trail, a three-pronged one. The one straight ahead ran to the Orrindorfs' little secluded tributary valley off there to the east. The one to the right went to Bear Meadows, the only town on this part of the eastern slope.

They took the other one and an hour later were home. It was a regal place to live. Jack Staples had built at the foot of a protected canyon with a flat alluvial floor. Far above the house, at the head of the canyon, were his horse corrals; they could hear the squealing of the fighting stallions, the restless nickering of hungry mares, as they cantered through the aspen grove.

Back of the house, in the grove of silvery aspens, there were long stacks of hay marching off into the shadows like well-disciplined troops. In the barn nearest the house hung 20 sets of harness, and when his roads were clogged by snow Jack Staples could hitch 40 horses at once to his log snow-drags.

It was not quite noon when they reached the grove, but the high canyon walls had cut off the sun and a chill like evening had fallen. Through the trees they saw the twinkle of yellow light from the bunkhouse, which lay above the main house in the center of the grove. In the big house, only the kitchen chimney showed smoke. All the windows were dark.

"Let's unpack and get some grub," Wayne said. "Three weeks in the saddle is too long."

Jud and Chuck did not answer. Their mood had changed. In their minds they were already deciding to draw their pay and go back to the warm west slope. The packhorse waited patiently at one of the corral gates. They did not offer to help unpack. They unsaddled their horses and stalked up to the bunkhouse, grumbling to each other.

Wayne unpacked the horse himself. He threw all of the gear except the two riders' bedrolls into a little log tool shed. Where the big house stood there had once been a hardrock mine, and this old shed had been the miner's cabin. Wayne remembered it from his childhood because his mother had called it the "murder cabin." Someone—Wayne never could learn who—had been stabbed to death in it. There were dark little cabins with dark little tales back of them all over the gold country.

He took the two bedrolls to the bunkhouse. Jud and Chuck stood beside a cold stove, stripping

off the clothing they had worn for three weeks. The long tiers of bunks were empty.

"Where is everybody?" Wayne asked.

"There ain't even a cook," Jud said. "There ain't been a meal cooked in that kitchen back there for two weeks."

"I'll find out where everybody is."

He went down to the big house and opened the heavy front door quietly, and a cold mustiness gave him a clammy welcome. It was a living room 40 feet square, with a massive fireplace on one side holding two eight-foot logs in a ready bed of pinecones. The rustle of mice in the cones told him how long it had been since a fire had burned here. He had left three weeks ago, while it was still summer. No one here had noticed that fall had come.

Off the living room was the big front bedroom. Wayne remembered it from his childhood as a bright, sunny room, with clean curtains, with his mother's violin hanging on the wall and with her family pictures on the bureau and the scent of her perfume in the air. It was empty now, with the same musty smell. He went back to the living room and touched a match to the pinecones in the fireplace. Lennie Brody came in from the kitchen hall and said, "Howdy, Wayne. You made a good trip."

Lennie was Jack Staples' "house cook," a wizened little browbeaten man who was worked to death keeping—or half keeping—a house that should have had a staff of servants.

"Where is everybody?" Wayne asked him.

"There's only me and Ev. Everybody else quit."

"Where's Pa?"

"In town. Are you hungry?"

"As a wolf. So are Jud and Chuck."

"I don't have to cook for no saddle-bums," Lennie said with dignity.

Wayne clapped him on the shoulder. "Go on, Lennie—fix us up something. Where's Ev?"

"In the kitchen. I'll tell him it's you. He bet me a dime you wouldn't make it back fer another week."

He vanished back into the hallway and Wayne stood there soaking up the warmth, trying to relax. "In town" could mean either Bear Meadows, six miles away, or Angels Camp, which lay beyond the pass, fifty miles down the west slope.

"You made a quick trip of it," Ev Winkler said, coming in from the kitchen hall. "Bring Jud and Chuck back?"

"Yes, but they're not going to stay."

"They better! Wayne, I'm glad you're back. Things couldn't be no worse. We ain't ready for winter and we ain't goin' to be. I need six to ten men—six is the least—and I ain't got nobody. We stand to lose a thousand head of cattle if an early snow hits us."

Everett Winkler had worked for Jack Staples for 20 years. His hair and beard were white but he

had the same energy Wayne remembered from childhood. It was Ev who had driven the spring-wagon that took Althea Staples and her son away from this valley 16 years ago.

For Ev, Wayne had the feeling a man should have for his father. He smiled at Ev. "What's wrong? How come Pa let everybody get away?"

Ev swore. "The old idiot! Wayne, your Pa ain't drawn a sober breath in two weeks. Him and Chet Orrindorf are in their second childhood, I think. They've fell out over a woman."

Wayne smiled again. "They'll get over it but I guess you and I will have to get to work. What's her name?"

"Pieta San Juan and they *won't* get over it, damn her soul!"

"Who is she?"

"A chesty little Mexican tramp that can't be more than twenty-four or -five. A singer or actress or something. They call her the Spanish Thrush. She sang down in the opera house in San Francisco and I hear they sold out the house two weeks straight. Then she come up to Sacramento and Angels Camp, and it taken five dollars in gold dust just to get in and stand up." Ev cursed again. "You never seen such a change come over two men. You know how close your pa and Chet always was."

So this was the vaguely dire scandal of which Dutch Orrindorf had warned him! Wayne smiled delightedly. "You mean Pa and Chet have fallen out over an actress—a young one at that? I didn't think they had it in them."

A pink flush spread under Ev's white whiskers. "It ain't funny. It ain't even decent." He called Pieta San Juan a bad name and went on, "She lives with her cousin and his wife—you know, Richard Rodriguez. They're real good people. Dick works for the British syndicate that bought out the old Metal Queen mine."

Wayne said, "It seems that Dutch Orrindorf takes this rivalry pretty seriously." He told Ev about the senseless fight with Dutch in the meadow below the pass.

Ev snorted. "He's a fine one to talk! She was his girl first. He went out with her and then let his own pa try to beat his time! Then Jack started chasin' her. They take turns takin' her out now."

"I'll go into town tomorrow and see if I can find Pa—or at least hire some men," Wayne said. "I wouldn't worry. She'll have to get out before winter, and that's not very far away."

## 2

WAYNE LAY SLEEPLESS late that night, despite the deep weariness in his bones, staring out of his bedroom window and listening for the sound of his father's return. There was a frosty ring around the moon and a small local storm was blow-

ing a smoky fury in those darkly clustered clouds up there on one of the white peaks.

He slept eventually, waking when he heard Lennie shaking the kitchen grates. He dressed and went into the living room and stirred up the fire there. His father's bed in the adjoining bedroom had not been slept in. Wayne went to the kitchen, where Lennie was slamming five heavy plates down on the round kitchen table.

"Wait till Jack gets back, that's all," he was grumbling. "I'm a house cook. I got a notion to quit."

Wayne got his hat and jacket. He did not like Lennie. He did not like any man who let himself be abused the way Jack Staples abused this one.

"You can leave right now, for all of me," Wayne said.

Jud and Chuck were standing in the bunk-house door, arguing with Ev. The old man appealed to Wayne before he even reached the bunk-house.

"How do you like that? They want a rest today!"

Wayne looked at Jud. Jud was the firmer character of the two. Chuck would do whatever Jud did.

"Let's go, Jud. Let's saddle up. You asked for work when you came here."

Jud swallowed and bit his lip. He turned and started toward the corral, Chuck following. Wayne called after them, "Come up to the house for breakfast when Lennie rings the bell."

They did not answer or even look back, but when the breakfast bell clanged through the thin, cold air they came clumping into the kitchen, their good humor at least partly restored. "My old daddy used to tell me that Lincoln freed the slaves," Jud remarked slyly, as they ate, but I reckon nobody told him about the Staples outfit. Reckon we won't see you out there with the ordinary cheap help today, will we, Mister Staples?"

Wayne had them safe, for today at least. He grinned and said, "I've got a stray father to round up. Depends on what luck I have, when I'll get back."

Across flat, grassy meadows, through cool, shaded canyons, past the half-healed scars of abandoned mines, Wayne rode to Bear Meadows. Thirty years ago it had been a booming metropolis with 3,000–5,000–8,000 population—you could hear any figure. The Metal Queen had been only one of a thousand diggings then.

Today the Queen was the only mine still active, and it worked only when its constantly changing owners could raise the capital with which to drive its shafts deeper and deeper into the solid granite of the mountain that overhung Bear Meadows. There were no more than 50 or 60 people left in the town, another hundred or two—no one knew how many—scattered on this part of the east slope. Otherwise there were only the uncounted Indians,

the amiably self-sufficient Washoes whose complex family clans had never paid much attention to the gold rush and who had nothing to lose when it died here.

There was one street that twisted with the turn of the canyon and ended at its head, on it a store that was also the post office, a blacksmith shop, a lively stable that rented mostly freight-horses, and a saloon. Beside the saloon was a deeply worn foot-trail that rambled out of sight up another steep tributary canyon, at the top of which stood the peaked-roofed buildings of the Metal Queen. Tiers of old houses and cabins, almost all of them empty, lined one side of this canyon. Most of them, as well as the old gold-claims on which they sat, were now owned by Jack Staples.

Once, in Bear Meadow's heyday as a gold-town, a dozen honky-tonks had flourished here. There was only Joey Rose's saloon now, and Jack Staples owned it too. Back of Joey's place, in a shaded cove at the foot of the canyon, was a stone-fenced corral, watered by a tiny spring-fed creek that dribbled down from its source up near the Metal Queen. On a slope above the corral was the graveyard—the boothill found in every old mining town. Here it was six carved crosses that had been knocked over and replaced so often that no one knew where the graves were, and one soft lava slab with this inscription:

*Peter Kraus—1852  
Damn the Bankers!*

No one knew who Peter Kraus had been, but his last words would live.

There were a dozen horses wearing a dozen strange brands in the corral of Joey's saloon. Riders were hurrying through on their way to the warm coast—not very good riders, to judge by their horses. There was nothing left to hire, at this altitude, but the dregs of the Nevada mines.

Wayne went into the dark, sweet-smelling saloon. Joey Rose said, "Hello, Wayne. You've had a fast trip. All went well, I trust?" He leaned across the bar to shake hands, a slim, civil, hard-bodied man, an educated man queerly miscast here. All Wayne knew was that Joey was Jack Staples' devoted friend, and Joey's eyes discouraged inquiry.

Wayne shook hands. "Where's Pa?"

"I don't know. Why?" Joey fenced.

Wayne smiled. "I'm not running a count on him, but somebody's got to run the place. I hear he's got a lady friend."

"He slept upstairs here last night. He went out about an hour ago."

Wayne went out. He turned up the narrow path and began climbing the steep canyon, and the higher he went the more familiar it seemed. It was a lazy-man's trail that wandered back and forth across the narrow gully, from house to cabin and cabin to house. It had been cut by the feet of tired and probably not very sober miners of a generation

ago, and the stepping-stones across the little creek had been firmly placed for unsteady feet.

The cabins sagged, the brush had swarmed over the red clay of the diggings; the gold sluiced out of here had been spent a thousand times since this strike went broke.

The queer feeling of having been here before persisted, yet no detail seemed familiar. He passed one tiny house that certainly was occupied, a cabin of redwood slabs whitewashed again and again, its steep Alpine roof patched recently with tin and its tall crooked stovepipe newly guyed against winter gales.

"Wayne!" came a sudden glad voice. "Aren't you Wayne Staples?"

There was a girl standing in the doorway of the tiny house and Wayne's memory of this canyon suddenly clicked into place, sharp and clear, in his mind. She had been just a toddler then, a little flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, pink-faced girl in a faded brown dress. She had been about three when he was six, and she had been quick as the squirrel is quick, graceful and sure-footed like the deer.

He turned and went swiftly up the little walk, holding out his hands. "Fern Utley! Fern, I had forgotten you, but I'd know you anywhere. It's good to see you!"

"And it's good to see you too, Wayne."

They clutched each other's hands and stared at each other. Fern's hair had not darkened. Her skin was the same perfect pink and white and her blue eyes still had that haunting, wistful look. She had become a tall, slim, lovely woman who made him catch his breath.

"You look just like your mother," she said, after a moment. She kept on smiling at him. "I was sorry to hear about her. She was lovely to us."

"It's strange you should remember her that well. You must have been pretty young."

"I saw her only that one day, when my mother was ill," Fern said. "The day we played together here. She took you away soon after that but she didn't forget. She wrote to me from Santa Barbara when she heard that my mother had died. That was the only letter I got. Do you think I could forget?"

"That's the way she was."

"And you're like her, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid not. Fern, you'll hear lots of things about me—that I won't fight—that I'm a coward—"

"I don't think anyone says that. Come inside and let's talk! Oh, it's too bad dad isn't here! He's so anxious to see you."

He followed her inside. "I'm ashamed to say that I'd forgotten your father too, yet he was one of my boyhood heroes. It's almost as though I had deliberately tried to forget everything here. How is he?"

"Dad's all right. He's been sheriff for ten years. It was your father's idea. He's been so good to us."

This girl's father had driven a 10-horse freight wagon between Sacramento and Black Bear Valley when Wayne was a small boy. Wayne remembered Troy Utley as a big, slouching, loud-mouthed man in a red-checked shirt who always came into the aspen grove at a dead run, his big canvas-covered wagon rocking and rumbling and swaying, his 10 half-wild horses leaping in the harness like rabbits.

It was no easy job, driving a richly-loaded wagon through the pass in those days. Once Troy had dragged home an 800-pound grizzly bear that had raided his wagon during the night. He had killed it with a knife, a six-gun and the oak double-trees from the wagon and then had driven the rest of the way in with a broken collar-bone. Several other times, he had fought off lawless miners who tried to rob him.

Wayne remembered his father saying, "Troy Utley has got more guts than any man I ever knowed. He just don't know the feelin' of fear."

They sat down. Wayne looked again at the girl and saw the faded, patched dress she wore, and the Indian moccasins. He looked at the house and its meanness and the meagerness of its furnishings stirred the anger in him. It was still just a miner's shanty, a living room with unfinished pine walls and creaking floors, and back of it a small kitchen. To the left of the kitchen was a lean-to behind a curtained door.

That would be Fern's bedroom. This rickety old sofa he was sitting on would be where Troy Utley slept. This was all a man could afford when he worked for Jack Staples. What a place for a girl like Fern—a ghost-shanty in a dead town!

Fern patted the worn arms of her low rocking-chair. That and a small redwood table by the front door, were the only other furnishings in the room.

"Wayne, do you remember this chair?"

"Why—wasn't that my mother's sewing-chair? The one that stood by the window in the front bedroom?"

"Yes. Your father gave it to Dad after your mother took you away. He gave us lots of things."

But not a decent, honorable living, Wayne thought bitterly. Jack Staples drove a hard bargain.

"Fern," he said, "what's this about my father and Chet Orrindorf and some woman?"

She flushed a little. "What have you heard?" she parried.

"Only that he and Chet have quarreled and that she's less than half Pa's age."

"I'll tell you what I know. It's a little pathetic. I feel sorry for the poor old man."

Wayne smiled. "I gather that Pa made quite a spectacle of himself. What's she like?"

Fern met his eyes. "She's very pretty, Wayne. When she first came here three weeks ago we became quite good friends. I was crazy about her. She's traveled everywhere—New York, Boston, New

Orleans. They called her the Spanish Thrush on the stage."

"But still a third-rate entertainer."

Fern shook her head and frowned. "Not third-rate. Pieta could never be third-rate at anything. She would be the best."

"Then why get married?"

"There's no secret about that. She was very frank. There's no safety for a woman except in marriage, she says."

"But why an old man?"

Fern flushed again. "I'm not taking her side, but I do understand. With an old man she's safe from love, too. Can you understand that?"

"Not quite."

"I don't think men have been kind to her. I think men have taught her this hard-bitten philosophy she has."

"You like her, don't you?"

Fern shook her head. "No. When she first told me that, I thought it was some kind of sophisticated joke. Then I saw her with your father and then with Chet, and when I asked her about it she actually suggested that—that—"

She choked on her embarrassment. The pink flowed up her throat and over her face, and her eyes misted angrily. It took Wayne a moment to understand.

"That you take one and she take the other?" he cried incredulously.

"I wish I hadn't told you!"

But suddenly she could not hold it in either—suddenly they were looking at each other across the tiny room and rocking with laughter. Fern wiped her eyes on her apron.

"Oh, Wayne, it's so wonderful that you can feel this way about it! Everybody thought you'd be ashamed and I so hated to be the one to tell you about it."

Wayne shrugged. "Pa isn't the first man in the world to lose his wits over a woman, and I doubt if he'll be the last. All I want is to get his mind back on business."

Fern sighed. "I had forgotten that people could be so—well, you know—tolerant. I got to go to school down in Sacramento, you know, and then I got a job in the convent, sewing and cooking. I got to know lots of people, but then three years ago Dad got poorly and I had to come home and keep house for him. I haven't been out of Bear Meadows since."

"What?" He tried not to show the pity he felt. "But what do you do?"

She smiled a stiff smile. "What is there to do?"

A girl like Fern, working in somebody's kitchen to get through school, then working for her board and room in a convent and thanking her stars for the chance. *These damned shiftless frontiersmen!* he thought angrily.

"If I bring the horses in, will you ride with me?"

Her hands clenched on the arms of her rocker but she met his eyes frankly. "Wayne, I have nothing to wear—nothing I could ride a horse in. I'm sorry."

Outside a woman laughed, a sound like a bird. It broke the embarrassment of silence between them. Wayne looked out the small front window and saw his father and Pieta San Juan coming down the zigzag canyon trail from above. Jack Staples wore his 64 years lightly. He had on a black serge suit that needed pressing, and he carried his broad-brimmed black hat in his hand. His boots were firm and steady on the steep trail. The sun shone on his bald head and on the fringe of gray that surrounded it.

He was a powerful, rock-like man with a stubborn and coarsely handsome face. He was an unshakable man, but he had been shaken, and when Wayne looked at the girl who tripped along with her small gloved hand on his arm, he understood.

"See?" Fern whispered. "What did I tell you?"

Pieta San Juan was young, all right, but she had a mature, full figure and she knew how to dress it. She had on a sedate brown dress trimmed with little bits of fur, and a huge hat—a very fashionable hat, if Wayne could judge. He could not see her face or her eyes because of that hat, but the skin of her wrists had a mellow creaminess, almost dusky.

Wayne went to the door to watch them out of sight. The girl did not stir him, but he could understand how she could affect two old men like Jack Staples and Chet Orrindorf.

"Poor Pa! He's really in trouble, isn't he?" He reached for his hat on the little redwood table. "I'd better catch them and see if I can get him to go home and tend to business. Fern, when will I see you again?"

"I would like to see you any time," she said simply.

He put his hands on his shoulders. "Fern, why can't I get you a riding habit, so we can ride together? What else is there for us to do here?"

"You know I can't do that, she murmured.

"Why not? We're old friends, Fern. For my sake! You'd do it for me, wouldn't you? No one needs to know. There'll be nothing to explain to anyone. Please try to understand."

"No."

"What else am I to do with my own time? Please! You'd let me bring you flowers or candy, wouldn't you? Our families have always been friends."

He was talking too much and too fast, and suddenly he could not take his hands off her shoulders without embarrassing them still more.

The stricken look in her eyes made him sick with shame at what he had done, yet to back out would be a confession and he had nothing to confess.

"You're just like your father, aren't you?" she said.

He let go of her. "In what way?"

"You do exactly as you please. I think I understand your attitude toward fighting. You're going to have your own way about yourself no matter what people think."

The embarrassment had passed mysteriously. He felt sure of himself suddenly. He picked up his hat and tucked it under one arm. He took his purse from his pocket and opened it. Currency was not much in use up here in the gold country, and he had quickly learned that a purse was handier than a wallet.

He had drawn money from his father's Sacramento bank to pay off the crew and buy supplies for the return trip through the high pass. All he had left, besides some small change, was a newly-minted double eagle. He took out the glittering gold coin and folded the fingers of her left hand around it.

"I'll say just this much more, to make sure you understand. Anyone would do the easy things for you, Fern, but I'd like to be the kind of a friend you can count on for the hard things. It's not easy to say I want to buy you something, but that's the kind of friend I want to be to you."

She began crying—quiet, helpless tears that made him swear under his breath. He took her right hand and shook it as he would have shaken a man's hand.

"Will you go riding with me?"

"Yes," she said. "Wayne, Wayne—you really are my friend, aren't you?"

He went out quickly, because in another moment he would have kissed her. And she would have let him because she was numb from loneliness. She would have been grateful for anything that would prove she still had feelings.

But she had been right about one thing—he was, in some ways at least, exactly like his father. It was strange to discover that Jack Staples could be so easily understood.

He reached the street and saw Pieta San Juan turn into the general store. There was no sign of his father, but he knew where to look.

He went into Joey Rose's place and there stood Jack Staples at the bar. He gave Wayne a surly look.

"What do you want?" he growled.

Except for Joey, they were alone. And Joey was the kind of bartender who heard nothing, saw nothing. Wayne went to the bar and put his hat on it.

"Got back last night, Pa, and Ev said you were in town," he said. "I was up at Troy Utley's place and saw you pass."

Jack Staples squirmed. "Oh! Yes, yes, to be sure. Did you bring him and Chuck back?"

"Yes, but they're not going to stay."

"We'll hire others."

"What others, Pa? Take a look at the riff-raff that's passing through."

"That's what I want—riff-raff," said Jack

Staples. "Orrindorf is hirin' riff-raff. I want men that'll stand up for me."

"Take it easy, Pa," Wayne said.

Jack Staples stared at him. "You couldn't be in town five minutes and not hear all sorts of ridiculous lies about me. Chet Orrindorf stabbed me in the back. I been his friend for 35 years and he double-crossed me. That's the long and short of it and I don't care—what did you hear, anyway?"

"I heard you were both fond of the same woman," said Wayne. "That happens, Pa."

Jack's hand shot out and closed on his shoulder. "Don't give me your lip," he choked.

Stubborn and headstrong he might be, but before his son he was embarrassed. Wayne said, "You're a good-looking man, Pa. You don't show half your years, you've got plenty of money, and you'd treat a woman right. If she's the one you want, I hope you get her."

The stronger hand relaxed on his arm. "But your mother—"

"My mother is dead," Wayne said. "All I care about is getting some help for Ev."

Jack gave him a look of hangdog gratitude. Joey Rose set out a bottle and two glasses and said quickly, "Let's drink to that, Jack. Here's the first sense I've heard spoken this day."

There were voices out back; someone was turning horses into the canyon corral. As Joey poured the drinks the back door opened and Floyd and Earl Orrindorf came in. They saw Wayne and his father and went to the other end of the bar. They nodded—that was all. Their father and Jack Staples had been friends for 35 years, but they merely nodded.

Earl and Floyd were as tall as Dutch but not as heavy, not as blond and soft-looking. Big, rangy men in patched work clothing, they towered over the two faceless nonentities with them. Those two were typical "mine bums," drifters of the type that, according to Ev, were usually sent right on through this valley with instructions not to tarry.

Earl wore one gun, Floyd two. The last time Wayne had seen them, just before leaving for Sacramento with the trail-herd, they had treated each other to a friendly drink and tried, like pups separated at weaning, to get acquainted with each other as grown dogs.

For his father's sake, he had tried to get along with these two. For himself, he did not care whether they liked him or not. He still did not care but he said, "Hello, Earl—Floyd. Have a drink on me?"

Floyd turned with a grin. "I'll drink with you, Wayne."

"Proud to," Earl said. "Howdy, Jack."

He was the oldest one and, Wayne thought, the one with the most sense.

"Howdy, boys," Jack said, in a low voice, not looking at them.

Joey set out more glasses and filled them. The

two drifters downed their whiskey in some haste. Floyd raised his toward Wayne and Jack.

"To your heart's desire, Jack," he said.

Old Jack flinched and Wayne said sharply, "No call for that, Floyd. Act your age!"

Floyd grinned wider. "Tell Jack that. He's been might frisky lately, for an old man."

Jack winced. "Now Floyd!" he said. "Now Floyd!"

"Let's leave it between your dad and mine, Floyd," Wayne suggested.

"Maybe I don't want to," Floyd said.

Wayne tried once more. "I had to whip your brother yesterday. If I have to whip you, Floyd, it'll be because you can't keep your big mouth shut. Let's cut this out."

He turned his back to reach for his drink but he heard Floyd coming. He slid aside and backed across the room, calling out sharply, "Stop it, Floyd. I told you I don't want to fight you, but if you start anything I'll knock your thick head off."

He got the big stove between them and then he heard his father's grunt, a sound that came from a man suffering from deep shame. And that, too, was gun-point coercion.

"All right, let's go outside," Wayne said. "No use making things tough for Joey."

Floyd unbuckled his belt and handed his two holstered guns to Earl. He threw his hat and jacket on a table and went out.

Wayne put his hat and coat on the bar. Jack Staples muttered, "Let me see if I can cool him off, boy. He's awful big."

Wayne said, "Too big, Pa. He's all hands and feet."

He went out to where Floyd stood waiting in the street. As jauntily as he could, he took the two steps down from the narrow, rickety porch to the dusty street. A door slammed farther down the street and he turned his head enough to see Pieta San Juan come out of the store.

She was beautiful, all right, but it was an affected kind of beauty that left him cold. He met her eyes—big, black, deep eyes—and then felt them flick down to measure him arrogantly from head to toe.

She stopped when she saw the formal, ritualistic stance he and Floyd had assumed. Earl and Joey and Jack Staples and the two riff-raff Orrindorf hands came boiling out the door to watch. Wayne heard his father give a little stricken whimper, because he did not want this girl to see an Orrindorf whip a Staples. Then Floyd came at him.

### 3

NO OTHER WOMAN that Wayne knew would have stood in the street in a rough mining-town to watch two men fight; but Pieta San Juan did.



Floyd jumped. Wayne dropped to the ground and rolled aside, and as Floyd's boots hit the ground, Wayne hooked his left arm around one of them and dug in his toes. He turned Floyd end-over-end on his head and dumped him on his back in the middle of the street. Floyd rolled over and looked around for him dizzily.

"Does that prove anything?" Wayne asked.

Floyd got his legs under him and came at Wayne like a locomotive. Wayne backed away, letting Floyd's fists roll off his shoulders and head while he jabbed short, hard rights and lefts into Floyd's stomach. He took a little more punishment than he had to take because he wanted to get it over quickly.

Floyd was stronger than Dutch, but that was all. He wasted his breath yelling at Wayne, and for a long time he ignored the steady pounding on his hard, flat stomach.

"Didn't hurt me!" he grunted. "Stand up and fight like a man, you damned mama's boy! Didn't even feel it."

He fought like a schoolboy and he quit suddenly like a schoolboy. His belly-wall gave in under that merciless drumming. His breath went. He ran out of wind without a mark on his face. His arms got too heavy to hold up, and then Wayne went to work on his face. He opened a big cut in one of Floyd's eyebrows and again and again Floyd left himself wide open to wipe the blood out of his eyes with his sleeve.

He was tough, really tough. He kept coming until Wayne got the range and caught him under the ear with his right. Floyd's eyes closed. His hands opened and he sat down heavily and rolled over on his stomach.

Wayne wiped his face with his handkerchief and went over to where Pieta San Juan still stood.

"You'd better go along home, Miss," he said. "I don't think this is any place for you."

She turned and walked up the canyon. Wayne made sure she was gone. He went back to where his father stood.

"Let's go home, Pa. Where's your horse?"

"Down at Ernie's—the livery stable. I'll get him," Jack said. "You saw her. What—what do you think of her?"

"She'll be a handful, Pa, but you can handle her."

Jack's gray eyes lighted. "I'll go get my horse," he said. He went walking proudly away down the street.

Earl and the two drifters were helping Floyd to his feet. Floyd still was dazed, and his face was ghastly. Wayne looked at it and thought sickly, *Did I do that? I did, because that girl was watching.* . . . He went over to Floyd and put out his hand.

"There's no hard feelings on my part, Floyd," he said. "I just didn't like to see you tease the old man."

Earl got between them and said, "Let him alone, Staples. Ain't you done enough? You didn't need to cut him up thataway." Wayne let his hand drop and stood aside. They supported the reeling Floyd on his leaden feet and walked him heavily back around the saloon. When they emerged on their horses, Floyd was sitting straight in the saddle. Wayne sat down on the porch and watched them ride out of sight.

"They're a tough bunch," he said.

"I'd watch them after this," Joey Rose said.

Wayne shrugged. "It's up to them. I don't want to fight. What do you expect me to do?"

Joey sat down beside him. "Why don't you carry a gun?"

"I don't like to carry a gun."

"You should." Wayne shook his head and Joey went on impatiently, "You're wrong about those boys—at least about Floyd. They aren't just big, ignorant bruisers. They mean business. Can you even fire a gun?"

"Could a man spend three years at a Tidewater military college and not use one?" Wayne said, just as impatiently. "We learned to shoot with mirrors—to take a gun apart and put it back together in the dark."

"You won't need mirrors," Joey said. "Put on a gun and make sure you can use it or one of the Orrindorfs will kill you. Let this through your head—your troubles with that outfit have just started."

"Does this Mexican wench mean that much to Chet?"

"Chet has nothing to say about it, boy, and the girl is only a pretext. I've been here quite a while, I've watched this come to a head, I know the background. They've never been happy, playing second fiddle to the Sliding S, seeing it get richer and richer despite all the money sent out to keep you in fancy schools, while they work hard and barely get by from year to year. It was big enough for Chet but it's not big enough to divide among three."

"I see," Wayne said.

"One thing more. It's not pleasant but I'll give it to you straight: All your life you've been a disappointment to your father. If you left the valley now I would say you were smart. If you stay, put on a gun and make sure people know that you can use it. Stop this imbecile talk about not liking to fight! That's just asking for trouble."

Joey smiled one of those thin surface smiles as Wayne stood up to join his father, who was returning with his horse. "Remember what I told you."

Jack Staples led the way. They reached the cross-trail where the deeply-rutted trail led over the pass to the left and two other trails led right to the Sliding S and the CO. Wayne stood up in the stirrups and took a long, thoughtful look around at the colorful grandeur that was Black Bear Valley by autumn. He could not even see clearly the ridge at the other end, beyond which the Orrin-

dorfs were contained. He had never been over that far, even.

The Orrindorfs had to cross Jack Staples' range to get into a town owned mostly by Jack Staples, to drink at Jack Staples' saloon. Why had no one ever understood before how this would grate on those three big loutish men?

Ev Winkler came out of the house to meet them. Jack Staples swung down out of the saddle and handed his reins to Ev. He yawned. "Didn't sleep much last night. I reckon I'll go to bed. Tomorrow I'll go in again and see if I can send somebody over to Coliseum to hire some men."

"It's time," Ev said.

"Tomorrow you drop the wires at Buckhorn and fill it up. How much hay would you say is in the stack there?"

"Right at two hundred ton."

Jack yawned again. "I'll tell you—that's a good place for calvin'. Sift out a nice bunch of old potbellied cows and run 'em in there. You and Jud and Chuck and Wayne can do that tomorrow."

"I reckon not," Ev said laconically. "Dutch Orrindorf run a bunch of CO cows in there this morning."

"Aw, no!" Jack snorted.

"Go see for yourself!" Ev shouted. "They had the wires down and the herd in there and the fences tight again before we even knowed about it. They run the hell out of them cows to get there before Jud and Chuck and me could get out this mornin'."

"But that's my hay," Jack said petulantly.

"It was," Ev snarled at him. "Don't look at me! Where's the men I need to get this work done? Where you been ever' time I look for you lately? I been dingin' at you for two weeks to fill them winter medders. Damn it, Jack—"

"Just a minute," Wayne put in. "Why didn't you run Orrindorf's stuff out?"

"With two men? Jud and Chuck ain't in no mood to fight for the Sliding S! Dutch had four men with him, and he made sure we seen him."

Jack Staples thought it over, snapping his fingers absently. "Dutch thinks he's cute," he said at last. "I'll get you some men tomorrow, Ev. We'll take them cows of Dutch's out a sight faster than they come in. I'll learn that boy a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

He shambled into the house and Ev gritted. "All he thinks of is that woman! Did you see her?"

"I did."

"Now what do you think?"

"I wish he'd marry her and get it over with."

Ev's pale blue eyes blinked with relief. "I'm shore glad to hear you say that! Your pa was afeared you'd not like it. You see what I'm up against?"

"No I don't," Wayne said, "but let's find out. Let's get around and see what this place looks like. So far it's just scenery to me. I'd like to know what I'm doing."

"Let's eat first," Ev said, "if Lennie ain't poutin' too much to fix something. Wayne, I'm glad to see you take hold, because that old fool Jack ain't goin' to do it in time for winter. You don't know what winter is up here, and when you see it'll be too late. Damn that woman!"

Jack Staples did not even stir out of his room when Lennie rang the bell. Wayne and Ev ate in the kitchen with Jud and Chuck with a surly Lennie waiting on them indifferently.

"You two come along," Ev told Jud and Chuck as they got up from the table. "I want you to show Wayne what you and me seen this mornin'. You seen it too."

"Nothing to show," Chuck grunted. "Dutch Orrindorf just stole your Buckhorn medder and you set right there and let him do it, that's all."

It was the size of the Sliding S, rather than its complexity, that made Wayne slow in understanding how it was operated. Little by little, as they covered the valley on the nimble, tireless mountain horses, he began to get the picture in his mind.

It was not a valley, really, but a series of valleys, and it was not fenced, but Jack Staples' mark was on every inch of it. The Sliding S fences were an efficient hodge-podge of stone, rails and wire. There was a drift fence across the low north end, to discourage cattle from drifting down that long, canyon-cut slope, and a series of barricades across the south. The west sloped up beyond timberline to the pass through which the Sliding S herds were driven to winter pasture, and up there the lean feed discouraged drifting.

Ev stood up in the stirrups and pointed to the east. "See that ridge yonder?"

"Yes."

"Beyond that is a little valley, purtiest little place to live in these mountains, but it's small. That's the CO. That ridge, I'd say, runs about sixteen hundred feet high. There's a half a dozen little canyons that you can get through, but in the winter they close up with the first snow and we don't pay no attention in the summer."

Ev frowned. "The Orrindorfs have shipped light for the last couple of years. They can't help but be short of winter feed over there. Now you come with me and I'll show you your pa's winter medders. There's plenty of summer feed here but you're in bad shape without winter medders."

They rode to a stony knob above the timberline, and Ev pointed out across the deep valley, wheeling his horse in a tight circle. Some of the canyons filled with snow each winter, others had no water after the first freeze, others were too small or too hard to fence.

But there were others where herds could live comfortably behind a short, cheap economical fence, feeding from stack after stack of sweet mountain hay, packing the snow down under them as it fell and living on top of it under the shelter of spreading pines.

These were the "winter meadows," and as Ev talked, as Wayne studied the topography, he came to see how critically important they were. Each Sliding S winter meadow had its own name, its own characteristics—almost a personality acquired through 35 years of experience. From where Wayne sat he could see the haystacks twinkling through the trees. Hay, Ev said, was bucked in for miles around during the summer and stacked in each of these sheltered coves.

"Yonder, to the north, is Buckhorn, where the Orrindorfs moved in this mornin'," Ev said. "It's small but it's one of the best. Yonder is Taylor, where old Chance Taylor used to have a gold claim and got bit by a rattlesnake and died. He's buried there. Yonder is Shady, closest to the ridge between us and Orrindorfs—that's one of the biggest and best. This side of that—you can't see it from here but it's just under that bald hill there—is White-water."

"That one yonder is Black Skull Creek—you got to watch that one because in an open winter your water freezes over—and that one is Deer Flats, and that one's sheltered nice but it's a long way from hay because the timber is so heavy. It's quite a sight, Wayne, when we're hayin'—from late June through to roundup. We keep forty mowers goin' from daylight to dark, changin' teams at noon. Twenty men on bucks and sweeps. You can stack a right smart of hay thataway."

The white tops had turned orange as the late sun hit the peaks for the last time that day. In the timbered canyons below them, bluish cold night shadows had already settled in thickly. Wayne turned his horse and for the first time the Sliding S felt like home as he thought of the big fireplace, of supper cooking in the kitchen while outside the magnificent, strong house the stately aspens maintained their eternally dignified quiet.

All this riches—for comfort was riches up here—and a girl like Fern Utley lived like a bird in a box! He tried to remember her but only a faint, nagging impression of the feel of her shoulders under his hands would come back. It irritated him that he could remember the Mexican girl's face quite clearly.

Next morning before breakfast he took a stroll in the brisk air. Jud and Chuck were saddling up in one of the corrals. Ev was sitting on the top rail talking to a stranger who leaned against a black horse. Wayne heard Ev say, "You can talk to Wayne but I don't think he'll go that high. Nobody ever paid that kind of wages around here."

"The Orrindorfs are payin' it," the stranger said in a nasal drawl.

He was a small, wiry man with small dark eyes and a big red nose. Under his coat he wore two guns buckled high around his stomach. He was not very clean.

"Joey Rose sent this feller out to see about a

job," Ev said to Wayne. "Name is Johnny Cuesta." Ev's face warned, *No, no, no!* behind Cuesta's back.

Wayne was already of the same mind, but he asked, "How much do you want?"

"A hundred a month."

"Afraid not."

Wayne got down from his horse and tied it. Cuesta followed him, leading his own horse. "I don't work for less," he said. "I reckon you've heard of me. Johnny Cuesta."

"Afraid not."

Cuesta opened his coat. On his vest was an old bronze badge. "Special operative, Nueces Cattlemen's Association. I cleaned out the Bradley gang in Texas."

"That's not the kind of help I need," Wayne said.

Cuesta began breathing light, short, nervous breaths. He was at the end of a rope of some kind. He was a dirty bun with two guns and a broken-down saddle on a cheap horse, and the broken veins in his big red nose testified as to how he had become this. He followed Wayne down through the grove, hobbling along behind him on his runover boots, arguing in a snarling, breathless voice.

"Look, kid, you can use me. I'm Johnny Cuesta. You ain't talkin' to no ordinary range bum."

"No job, Cuesta. Get it—no job!"

Jud and Chuck quietly came to the fence and then as quietly clambered through it and began following Cuesta. Both boys shuffled along quietly with their hands on their gun-butts.

"I can work for the Orrindorfs but I always worked for big outfits whenever I could," Cuesta said in that nervous snarling voice. "A hundred a month—what's that to an outfit like yours? Look, kid—don't turn your back and walk away from me like I was some ordinary range bum—"

He began cursing and Wayne whirled and said, "Get your horse and get out of here, Cuesta—and keep your hands away from those guns! You're not as good as you used to be and you never were as good as you thought you were. I want you over the pass by sundown."

Cuesta stopped. His mouth opened tautly over his stubby black teeth. He turned his toes wide to set his feet in a soldier's stance and leaned back, and his ragged black coat swung away from his gun-butts.

He was only the shadow of the man he had once been—a dirty shadow, rundown and ill-smelling, no more than vile now where he might once have been magnificently evil. But there were nerves in him that still twanged to challenge, and as his narrow, humped shoulders pulled back and his arms arched, he sloughed away years and decay.

"Look, kid, you don't seem to understand," came Cuesta's soft voice. "I told you—I'm Johnny Cuesta."

WAYNE MEASURED the distance between them with his eye. He thought he knew the effective range of a six-gun as well as any man who ever fired one, but there was an irrational tingle of fear all over the skin of his back, a feeling that swarmed all through his body like a swift chill. His hand itched for the butt of his gun and in his ears the blood pounded and pounded and pounded.

A split second passed and then Wayne said, "Let's go, Cuesta. You're not going to hit the broad side of a barn from that range—and I am. Get on your horse and ride. Your kind can't stop in the valley. I want you over the pass by sundown."

Cuesta stood there watching him, half hawk and half snake as the man he had once been reclaimed his shell for a moment.

The hard evil will in him softened and suddenly he was just another range bum with a tomato-red nose and patched, seedy clothing. He turned and started back toward his horse.

Cuesta's nerves were in bad shape. He tried three times for the stirrup and then had to fit his boot into it with his hands. He swung up on the black horse and turned it. He buttoned his coat over the guns and rode past Wayne saying, "You and me will settle this some other time."

Wayne snarled at him, "Over the pass by sundown—remember! If I catch you around here again I'll have you taken over at the end of a lead-rope."

Cuesta hit his black horse over the withers with the split ends of the reins and it broke into a canter. He went out of sight and the breakfast bell clanged again and Ev Winkler came running down from the horse corral. Under his whiskers his face was gray.

"You don't know Johnny Cuesta, do you?" he said.

"I do now," Wayne smiled.

"You don't," Jud said. "You had a lot of luck, Wayne. I heard about Cuesta when I was a kid. He killed five men. He's bad—real bad."

"Maybe he was once," Wayne said, "a long time ago. I had an instructor at college who had known several Texas bad men back in the sixties. They were dangerous only at point-blank range. They had to get in close. You can't pull that fast and shoot accurately, and they all relied on speed. I was taught to use a gun at maximum range."

After breakfast, Wayne rode off with Ev, Jud and Chuck on a further inspection tour of the country.

Ev led them on up the ridge and down a long, winding trail into the canyon on the other side. Then they crossed ridge after ridge, and everywhere Ev pointed out where gold-hunters had worked this valley. The tough mountain brush had already re-

claimed these raw gashes in the earth. It would not be long before the trail of the gold-hunters through here would be lost.

They crossed a sloping alluvial apron and here the deep grass had been cut to a stubble. The mowers that had cut it—18 of them—were lined up in symmetrical rows under the pines in a nearby canyon, covered with brush. There they would lie until next year's haying-season.

Wayne missed something. "Where are the stacks?"

Ev pointed across the oak-dotted stubble to where the heavy timber began at the foot of the canyon, several miles away.

"In Shady, yonder. That's one of the best cow-meddlers anywhere up here. You and me and Chuck can go over there and see how that herd is while Jud goes over to the Orrindorfs. We always fill Shady first. You could bring a thousand head through the winter there. Stone fences, a warm spring-fed creek, good beddin'-grounds, plenty of pines for shelter, and all that hay nearby."

They crossed the stubble and entered pines and firs again, and cattle began moving down toward them, drifting aimlessly between the trees. "Now what the hell!" Ev muttered. "That's our stuff from Shady. How'd they break out?"

"Two bits says it's the Orrindorfs," Jud murmured.

They plunged into a steep canyon that rose above them into a lovely miniature valley with a flat, sloping floor. Here, on either side of the boiling creek, Jack Staples had stacked his hay-stack after stack, as far as Wayne could see. It was a perfect box canyon, closed at the top and requiring only that long stone fence with the wire gate at the bottom.

It took a man with nerve and imagination to raise cattle the way Jack Staples raised them. It was a big concept—only those were Orrindorf CO cattle back of that stone fence. Those were CO cattle eating Sliding S hay and chewing lazy cuds in the shade of Sliding S pines.

Ev's chin trembled with anger. He reached into his saddle-pocket for his wire-cutters.

"Hold it!" Wayne said. "What are you going to do?"

"Turn them cows out," Ev rasped.

"Just a minute." Wayne stood up in the stirrups for a look around. "Our stuff has already scattered badly. The four of us couldn't separate them from this herd, once we open that gate. You know that! What would we gain?"

"What are you goin' to do then?" Ev raged. "Let 'em get by with it?"

"They already have. Ev, how long will it take to fill the rest of our meadows?"

"With just the four of us?"

"Yes. Let's not count on any help."

"Say—a week."

"And how many head will we have left over?"

"This six hundred from Shady at least. You sure ain't goin' to try to drive through the pass again?"

"What else can I do? Be reasonable, Ev! If we turn Orrindorfs' cows out, we've still got them on our hands. I'm not going to be responsible for any man losing that many cattle in the snow. They're trying to make a fight of this, Ev. You saw that fellow, Cuesta, this morning. That's the kind of man we'll have to hire if we try to butt heads with the Orrindorfs. Is that what you want? Do you want to get somebody killed or do you want to save Pa's cattle?"

Ev was too shaken with rage to answer. He turned his horse and dug in the spurs. Wayne took one last angry look at the Orrindorf herd and followed more slowly.

"When you aim to start for Sacramento?" Jud asked.

"As soon as we're caught up here and I can get a crew."

"I'm goin' with you."

No use arguing. "All right," Wayne said.

In a few minutes they caught up with Ev. "I reckon you're right," the old man said. "It's a hard thing to do, but it's smart, and it's time somebody got smart. But I wish you had more time! If you get caught in that pass—"

"We'll have to take a chance," Wayne said.

"Then let's get at it." The old man changed as his mind changed. He stood up in the stirrups to give his orders. "Wayne, you and Jud get behind them cows the Orrindorfs run out of Shady and head toward Taylor's medder. Remember where I showed you where it was?"

"Yes."

"Me and Chuck will go ahead and see what shape it's in for that many head. We may have to th'ow some into Whitewater. Black Skull is full but we can put a few more head in there. Deer Flats is empty. I hate to put more than four-five hundred head in there but this winter she'll just have to carry more. But we'll fill Taylor's medder first."

He had work to do and he was a changed man. He wheeled his horse and headed down the slope and vanished in the timber, Chuck cantering along behind him. Jud hooked his leg over his saddlehorn and twisted a cigarette.

Jud took his time lighting and enjoying his cigarette. He looked through its smoke at Wayne. "You never worked for Ev before, did you?"

"No. Pa chased me out with the trail-herd before I barely knew my way around the place."

"Take yourself a good, long breath, Wayne, because it's the last one you'll have until Ev gets them cows in. I don't know where that old man gets the stren'th! You think you're pretty husky, kid, but Ev will have your pants draggin' out your own tracks every time you get off'n your horse before this week is out."

He did.

It had been hard work on the trail to Sacramento, but it was slow work, exhausting mostly because of the long hours.

Ev drove them hard. He treated Wayne no different than Jud and Chuck. He expected as much from Wayne as he got from the others. He worked horses harder and ran cattle faster than he had ever before in his life. He cursed continuously—at Wayne and Jud and Chuck, at the Orrindorfs, at the weather, at the nature of cows, which had not sense enough to come down out of the higher altitudes when fall came.

The mornings were colder, with white frost thick everywhere and remaining on the north slopes until noon. The afternoons were sweet hours of mellow, hazy beauty and warmth, only no one had time to enjoy them.

The upper slopes had all been combed by the round-up crew while Wayne and Jud and Chuck were going through the pass with the trail-herd. All these wild cattle, most of them born up there in the higher levels, had been bunched down in the center of the valley. There was leed enough to hold them there for any ordinary length of time, and the meadows would all have been filled long before this in an ordinary year.

Jack Staples returned to the ranch once, but neither his son nor his men saw him. He came in, spent a night there and went away again, in a filthy temper, according to Lennie.

Four men came out to ask for jobs, sent there by Jack. Wayne kept two of them. They were not bad men but neither were they very good. He browbeat Lennie into feeding the other two before sending them on, because up here no man went away with an empty belly. But he sent them on.

They filled the meadows and there were 11 hundred head left over. There were, Ev estimated, 70 or 80 branded CO strays in the bunch, another hundred with no brands at all, the balance Sliding S. The last gate was closed on the last winter meadow. They had done all they could and there were 11 hundred cows too many.

"Go git your trail crew, Wayne," Ev said. "Me and Jud and Chuck will start movin' this bunch up towards the high pass. We'll have to take it slow until they get trail-wise, but don't you waste no time. Tell Lennie to bring us out some grub."

The thought of seeing Fern Utley again was a strong tonic. He could see her clearly in his mind, and what his mother would have thought of Fern, and how she might fit in with the MacAndrews and their friends down in Santa Barbara did not matter somehow.

A mile from Bear Meadows he saw a man coming toward him on a steady old brown horse. They started to pass each other with a civil nod but then the man said, "Mr. Staples, if you please, sir—one moment." Wayne stopped his horse.

"Yes, sir?"

"My name is Rodriguez—Dick Rodriguez. I should like to express myself about the situation in my family."

Wayne liked the looks of this serious, decent-looking man. He shook his head. "It is not any of my business, Mr. Rodriguez."

"But I should like to express myself, if I may. Nothing like this has ever happened in my family before. We were always people of a certain respectability."

Wayne was seeing Fern Utley too clearly to be much interested in the Rodriguez family, but he had to be civil. "You've never heard me say anything against any member of your family, sir," he said.

"I know, but this girl requires explaining," Rodriguez said earnestly, painfully. "Her father was a teacher of music in the University of Mexico. He was a very fine musician and Pieta is, I think, quite as good. If he had lived, I think it might have been different with her, but he died five years ago and unfortunately there was not much money. Pieta got a place with an opera company, and after that I did not know what became of her until I heard she was in San Francisco, singing there. I went down to hear her and we became acquainted."

He looked down at the ground in an agony of embarrassment. "I did not know she was coming up to Bear Meadows. With my own small children in the house I wish she had not come, yet I cannot make myself drive her out. But I wish I could, because she is a bad girl. Bad, bad!"

Wayne shook his head. "Crazy, maybe, but not bad. Don't take it too hard, Mr. Rodriguez. When your own father turns into a gibbering fool at the age of 64, you'll have something to squirm over."

He got away finally, before it became as embarrassing to him as it obviously was to Rodriguez, a solid, sensitive, decent man torn between his own decent instincts and family loyalty. Wayne rode on into town, and when he saw how crowded Joey's corral was he thought, *My luck is with me.* . . .

He went into the saloon and counted 14 men at the bar. One or two looked like cowhands but the rest were pretty bad.

"Who wants a job?" he said.

A moment of silence. Then a voice, "What kind of a job?"

"I'm taking a herd down to Sacramento. I'll pay a dollar a day for that, a dollar-and-a-half a day to anybody who'll come back and work through the winter."

An old man not quite sober stepped away from the bar, pulling blearily at the frowsy scruff on his chin. "Can ye use a good crew-cook? First cook for the Nevada Silver and Gold Production Company. Fed seventy men all summer."

"You're hired," Wayne said. "I'll take you along on the drive." He looked at the others. "Three hot meals a day—on the trail! What else do you want?"

He got six riders and a cook but only one of them, a hard-faced Missouri kid named George Candy, looked like a cowhand.

As he led them out from behind Joey's place, a buggy pulled by two nimble grays came spinning down the street. Sitting up stiffly with the lines in his hand was Jack Staples.

Beside him sat Pieta San Juan, in a scarlet dress with a dark red cape over her shoulders. Her hair was put up loosely in what, to Wayne, was too theatrical an arrangement, but it did frame her tawny, perfect little face exquisitely.

He was sure his father had seen him too, but old Jack gave no sign. The buggy went swiftly out of sight.

"Who's the old gent?" said George Candy, the Missourian, a ribald smile on his taut-skinned face.

"My father," Wayne said. "He came to town to hire men."

"Kind of got sidetracked, didn't he?"

Wayne saw the twinkle in the kid's eyes. He said, "When I'm Pa's age, I hope I'm sidetracked the same way."

Candy nodded. "Me too. There's two kinds of women, Staples—that kind, and the kind I get."

Wayne liked this kid. He couldn't be more than 19 and he would be quarrelsome, hard to handle, but he had a tested, capable look. He'd work, he'd make a hand, but then he'd drift on and get drunk in the wrong saloon at the wrong time, say the wrong thing and get shot and buried without mourners a long way from home. That was the look he had on him.

"Take these men on out to the place, Candy," Wayne said. "Tell the old man out there—if there is one there—to get a cook-wagon rigged up. Tell him I'll be along in an hour."

He turned his horse up the canyon to the Utley house. A shaggy man with fierce gray eyebrows answered his knock. Wayne remembered this face vividly but he was shocked at what the years had done to it. The mighty hunter of his childhood, the grizzly-killer, the man who whipped wagon-robbers and then forgot to mention it, was an old, old man.

"Hello, Troy," Wayne said. "What did you bring me from Sacramento?"

Troy Utley charged out and picked Wayne up in his arms. "You little devil, if that don't take me back!" he shouted. "Come inside and let's have a look at you."

They went inside. "Where's Fern?" Wayne asked. "I'm in a hurry. I've got to make another trip to Sacramento."

"She went berry-pickin'. Set down, Wayne. I want to talk to you. I'm at a point where I don't know what to do next and Joey Rose says you got good sense. How are we goin' to keep them two old men from killin' each other?"

"They won't kill each other," Wayne said.

Troy shook his head earnestly. "They will!



Two nights ago they drawn on each other and if it wasn't for me and Earl Orrindorf, one of 'em would be dead now. I got holt of your pa in time and Earl knocked Chet down and his shot went into the ceilin', but next time we ain't goin' to be so lucky."

"They actually tried to kill each other?"

"I'll tellin' you what happened, Wayne. Chet's gone over the pass to Angels Camp—to buy something purty for that woman, I figger. I told him and Jack both that I didn't want both of 'em in town at once, but I can't enforce that very long. Wayne, I want you to do something."

"What?"

"Buy that woman off! Jack will give you the money. Don't tell him what it's fer—just buy her off."

Wayne frowned. "What do you think her price is?"

"Oh—anything! Anywhere from five to fifty thousand."

Wayne thought of his father and he knew he couldn't do it. Stubborn, dictatorial, wrong oftener than he was right where other people's rights and feelings were concerned, Jack Staples still deserved better than that kind of interference from his own son. *If he wants her that badly*, Wayne thought, *let him have her. . . .*

He stalled Troy. "It wouldn't do any good. The Orrindorf boys are after property, Troy, and if the girl goes they'll pick a fight about something else. I'll think it over but I don't like it."

Someone was coming up the path in front. Wayne looked out and saw Fern, and a fierce possessive passion, a thing completely lawless in quality and intensity, suddenly choked him. The girl was dressed in a skirt and a faded old blue waist. Her ankles were bare and she wore the same old worn moccasins. Her sunny hair hung in a thick braid down her back. She carried a sunbonnet in one berry-stained hand, a bucket of berries in the other.

She looked tired, she looked tense with the continuous pressure of loneliness that was close to madness—but she suddenly saw Wayne's horse and her whole face lit up. She almost ran up the steps. Wayne opened the door and Fern put her bonnet and berries down and held out her hands.

"Wayne! Oh, it's been so long since you were here! Oh, Wayne, I'm so glad to see you—so glad!"

She would have come straight into his arms except for Troy—Wayne knew that. "Don't he look fit, though? He's got to hit the trail to Sacramento with another herd, honey," Troy said. "He just dropped in to tell you good-by."

"Then," said Fern, "why don't you go somewhere and let him do it?"

Troy said, "What? What? But doggone it, Fern—oh! Oh, I see!"

He got out clumsily and then Wayne did not have to do or say anything. She came to him. She melted into his arms with a little eager whimper.

Her mouth came up to meet his with pressure for pressure and warmth for warmth.

He had never kissed this way before, but it was good. It was the best thing in the world. It was all there was in the world.

## 5

THE HERD MOVED slowly. Long before that first day was over, Wayne thanked his stars for George Candy. The Missouri kid knew far more about this job than Wayne did—more, even, than Jud and Chuck. It was George who set the pace, who kept the heavy-gaited old cows shuffling along steadily and who held back the adventurous young steers.

By evening they had reached the slope below the pass where Wayne had whipped Dutch Orrindorf. Timberline was only a few hundred feet higher than this, but still several hours away. Here the cook had pitched his camp, where there were still a few trees to break the icy night wind. The tired cattle veered suspiciously from the cook-fire and sheeted wagon and tied wagon-teams. They circled it warily, tossing their heads with a noisy clatter of long horns.

"Yah, yah, yah-cows, yah-cows, ya-h-cows," George Candy sang, a rhythmic, soothing singsong that he took round and round the herd. A weary old cow lay down with a grunt, and then another, and another.

A tremble of decision passed from brute to brute and the whole herd bedded down suddenly. Soon Goodhew, the tail-man, came plodding in behind five old cows and their newborn calves. Candy unsaddled his horse, hobbled it, and spread his blankets.

"I'll catch me some sleep, Staples," he said, "and then I'll ride nighthawk. Them critters worry me. They're spooky. Maybe it's bein' up so high."

Three of the men started a blackjack game. Goodhew dealt. Wayne was sure he was crooked but it was none of his business. The game broke up with Goodhew holding an IOU for \$10 from one of the other riders, payable in Sacramento.

Wayne sat late that night staring into the cook's banked fire. When he thought of Fern it was with a curiously mixed and indecisive regret. He had pulled free of her clinging kiss and fled like a coward, knowing that there was no resistance left in the confused girl, knowing that loneliness and the fear of much more loneliness had betrayed her.

The surge of shame, that he had kissed her that way at all, followed quickly. *She didn't know what she was doing*, he thought, *staring into the dancing flames. She didn't, I know she didn't. But I did. . . .*

The wind grew colder. It died and the frost crusted like snow on the dead grass. The Mis-sourian shook Wayne out of his blankets just as the paralyzing cold dawn wind rose. Candy was in his own blankets and sound asleep while Wayne was still trying to get the cook's head out from under the covers.

He began to dread this drive. The cold had a real alarm in it, more than a warning. As the sky lightened he found himself watching apprehensively for clouds. The slightest congestion of clouds over that high-tilted horizon, where the scarp of the Sierra blunted the pressure of masses of wet east-bound marine air, could mean snow. Ahead of them lay wide-open gold towns like Angels Camp and Placerville. How far he would be able to trust even Jud and Chuck when they got close to the honky-tonks, the whiskey and the girls, only time would tell.

The sun rose a swollen globe of golden light. A flush of warmth burst over the jagged eastward peaks and Wayne felt the tang of energy in every breath he drew. His spirits rose suddenly, as the herd hit the trail.

The last live-oak, the last stunted, twisted and half-starved pinon-pine were left behind. Thick grass gave way to wiry thin grass interspersed with great slabs of bare rock where the hard spine of the Sierra Nevada had broken through its sparse flesh. The air grew colder, thinner.

Wayne panted for breath. The horses gasped and resisted the spur. It was hard to keep the fat cattle moving at all. The lack of oxygen up here sapped man and beast alike. It was like drowning. There was nothing in the air here at all—no moisture, no dust except the local cloud raised by the herd. The unimpeded rays of the sun scalded the eyes, and between eyestrain and lack of oxygen Wayne's head ached. He heard the men snarling at each other and he knew their heads had this same nauseated splitting sensation.

The pass was not a single gap but a series of them. These myriad stony canyons all looked alike, but they were not alike. On the west side the descent was steep and swift. The wrong canyon could lead the front of a herd to an edge where footing ended and pressure behind could start a whole herd galloping over into thin air. It had happened before. It had taken many such mishaps before men learned that this was the best, the only "pass" across this divide.

The real trouble would not come until they started down the other side. There was no safe bed-ground until they got down close to the 5,000-foot level again. They did not reach the summit until nearly noon, and this worried Wayne.

Wayne dismounted on the summit to watch the herd plod past him, seeing red whenever he saw the Orrindorfs' CO brand. Candy came threading his way back between the cattle, picking his way slowly and carefully so as not to disturb the rhythm

of their march. He slid off his winded horse and rolled a cigarette, frowning.

"I been through this pass before but I never taken a real good look at it," he said. "How come your pa don't winter over in Nevada?"

"Better grass over here, I suppose, or he's closer to market, or he got cheap land—I don't know," Wayne said. "There's a reason for everything Pa does—or used to be."

Candy squinted at him. "Come on, now, Staples—have you got any idee what the hell you're do'n'?"

"Not much," Wayne said.

Goodhew came drowsing along behind, crowding the protesting old cows and the calves they did not want to hurry. Goodhew had the newest calf across his horse behind the saddle.

"I thought you said three hot meals a day, Staples."

There was no use babying this whiner. Wayne said, "You'll get them, Goodhew. I'll see that you get two hot meals tonight—how's that?"

Goodhew gave him a sullen look and plodded on, flicking his rope's end at the teeter-legged calves and their clumsy, worried old mothers. Candy got back on his horse.

"You come see what we're up against, Staples," he said.

"I've seen it."

"Not from where I seen it. You wouldn't take a herd through here a second time if you knowed what it looked like all in one piece. Dad-blamed-est sight—it'll make you sick to your stummick, it's so fur up."

Wayne followed him over the hump, and the long descent had begun.

Instead of going down the trail with the herd, Candy put his horse to the steep upward slope to the left. Wayne followed him. Their horses' shoes clanged on bare granite. Wayne felt the saddle slip under him as his horse extended itself, grunting and straining. Up, up, up—another thousand feet, where no living thing grew and where there was little organic matter underfoot and even less air. The odd thing up here was the wind—the steady, hard, cold wind.

Candy had the breathless voice of a deaf man. "Look down there, Staples—ain't that somethin'?"

Wayne looked around first at an exhilarating vista of tumbled green and black and white mountains. Over there to the west lay the growling black bank of fog that meant the sea. To the east, Black Bear Valley was an insignificant hollow in a mighty empire of swooping peaks and huge rifts that seemed to cut the very world in half. A hundred miles at least—a man could see a hundred miles in any direction!

Then he looked straight down.

Wayne was not afraid of heights, but the sudden feeling of being marooned on a pinpoint at the very top of the world made him clutch his sad-

dle-horn and dismount hurriedly. The canyon through which the cattle were filing below them was only a wrinkle, an insignificant welt on the side of the mountain. It was not really a canyon at all. Those cattle shambling along there were only inches from the edge of—nothing.

"She feels different up here, don't she?" Candy said. "It ain't so bad when you can't see what you're up against. Look at them trees down there. They look like carrot-tops, don't they?" He grinned that taut, snarling and yet somehow attractive grin of his. "Look at old Goodhew! He's goin' to try to catch the cook-wagon while you ain't lookin'."

Wayne tensed. "The fool! If he runs that herd—"

Goodhew pushed on into the herd, snapping the end of his rope to clear the trail. The old longhorn mother of the calf he carried behind his saddle crowded after him. Wayne and Candy could hear nothing up here, but they could imagine her worried bawling.

There was a sudden boiling spot of motion down there, with Goodhew in the middle. The old longhorn mother passed Goodhew. She whirled in the trail to face him, demanding her newborn calf. She bumped into another cow and lost footing—with her hind feet only, Wayne thought at first.

But she began sliding backward as she broke through the crumbling edge of the trail. She began sliding.

It did not look that steep . . . but it was. Over the edge she went. Goodhew hauled in his horse and stood up in the stirrups and watched her go. The angle of the cliff dropped away under her and she fell off into empty air, kicking and squirming. She hit the cliff again, bounced clear, hit it and bounced again, a bone-crushing impact that spun her end over end.

She stopped kicking and fell straight down, into black shadows of firs and pines in the rich bottom of the canyon. Three thousand feet she fell, and not a sound came up to Wayne and Candy.

Another cow began sliding, and then another, and another. They went one at a time, as though death had to be very methodical about this, slipping almost gracefully over that crumbling edge and spinning and bouncing and then dropping inertly into those blue-black piny shadows.

"Goodhew!" Candy screamed. "There he goes!"

The Missourian's strong bony fingers dug into Wayne's arm. Goodhew's horse reared. Five cows went over the side before the horse lost its wits and dangled too close to the edge of nothing.

Its hind feet went over. The calf behind Goodhew slid over its rump. It fell sprawling. It hit the edge and bounced clear. It did not kick.

The horse kept sliding. Its saddle slipped back around its taut flanks and turned over, and Goodhew spilled out of it head-first. He rolled clear of the horse and seemed to find a grip on the slope.

He sprawled there like a lizard on a fence, head-down.

The horse slid past him and turned end over end and went twisting out into empty air. Its saddle slipped off over its hind-quarters and it hit the cliff and smashed itself with its own weight. It followed its saddle inertly out of sight.

Goodhew moved and Wayne yelled at him silently, *Hold still, hold still!* He began running, yelling, "George bring the horses. Bring both of them. We'll need both ropes." He fell and slid and ran down to the trail somehow. He kept running, seeing the hub-marks on the rock wall where the cook had kept the wagon as far as he could from that crumbling edge, seeing the cloven prints in the thin soil and the scraped white places where the cattle had crossed bare, slick granite.

He kicked off his boots and put his holstered gun down beside him. He was not afraid of heights but this had him sick and trembling. He started down over the edge and the soft, cubed shale slid under his clutching hand. He was cool and steady suddenly because he had to be cool and steady.

He dug his toes in and let himself down inch by inch in the deep furrows dug by the sliding horse. Below him the sharp angle of the slope sharpened still more. Candy came galloping his own horse and leading Wayne's. He stood up in the stirrups and screeched, "No use, Staples. You git the hell back here! His face is all bloody."

"Throw me the rope," Wayne said.

Candy dismounted, swearing. He linked the two ropes together and sent the loop sailing accurately down to Wayne. Wayne tied the loop snugly under his arms with a hitch to keep it from tightening.

"You ain't pullin' me over the edge, Staples," Candy said. "I'll let you go first."

He squatted down with his back to the towering rock wall on the other side of the trail and kicked holes for his bootheels. He clutched the rope in his bony hands and let it pay out over his knee. Wayne slid down on the end of it, hearing the steady spill of Candy's obscenity. It sounded something like a prayer.

He came to that violent change in angle and the deep canyon yawned emptily. A speck of black flicked over him—the shadow of a wheeling buzzard. Another speck of black was just below him. Wayne took one quick look.

"Haul me up, Candy," he said. "He's dead. The horse stepped right in his face."

Goodhew's body let go its precarious grip and sailed out into thin air. Wayne thought of Pieta San Juan as he was coming up on the end of Candy's rope. Except for her, these cattle would be snug in winter meadows back in the valley. Except for her, Jack Staples would be running the Sliding S with his old iron-fisted skill and Goodhew would be alive.

By late evening they were safe in the bottom

of the canyon with the herd. The cook had pitched a good camp beside the river under gossipy pines.

"How fur back did Goodhew go over?" one of the men asked.

"Ten miles at least," Wayne said. "Why?"

"Can anybody find his body?"

Candy snorted. "No. Wouldn't be enough left to bury nohow. How come you're so broken up about Goodhew?"

"I ain't," the other smiled. "He had my IOU in his pocket."

The heart of the Mother Lode country lay just below them. They camped the next evening near the first and highest of the old gold-rush towns, a dying relic whose buildings were in worse ruin than Bear Meadows. But it had a saloon and a "dance hall," and Wayne expected trouble in keeping his boys on the job.

He had none. Perhaps Goodhew's death had sobered them. They worked hard and their complaints were a liturgy rather than an assessment of fact. This much Wayne knew by now—all cowboys bellyached. When they did not, something was wrong.

Here, the mighty tide of the gold rush had swept everything before it a generation ago. The crest of that tide had long since broken and receded, but there were graves in these mountains that would never be counted, names lost to all record. Those thumping crushers beyond the ridge beat a requiem of lost hope for a hundred thousand luckless ones.

Jack Staples had been one of the big ones, the strong ones; and if a calculating woman with a face like a creamy tropical flower had stolen his wits in his old age, nothing could rob him of his place in the legend that the gold rush was swiftly becoming. Jack Staples' herd wound on, day after day, lower and lower, and the ore-wagons, the freight wagons, the big log-rigs, got out of its way.

Below Placerville, in the sweltering noon heat of a hot fall day, the herd suddenly milled in a narrow canyon. Wayne was riding tail with Chuck when the dust swirled up in a cloud below him and some of the cattle turned and started to move uncertainly back up the trail. He stood up and tried to see what was wrong, but the dust hid everything.

In a moment, with Chuck's help, he got the herd moving again, but something down there still had the cattle excited. Someone was yelling. The herd swung to the right like a river breaking past a sandspit and then drifted down into the center of the canyon again.

The tail of the herd passed with Wayne and Chuck behind it. Wayne looked up and saw two men sitting their horses high on the side of the canyon. One of them shook his fist at Wayne.

"Staples, you filthy thief, you got some of my cows."

Wayne stopped his horse. "What did you ex-

pect me to do with them, Chet—leave them out to die? Dutch lost them while he was stealing Pa's winter meadows."

This was the first time he had seen Chet Orrindorf and he found now that he did not remember him at all. Chet was a shapelessly fat old man with thick glasses that made his pale blue eyes look enormous. He had a piping voice and a tobacco-stained chin. If Jack Staples' longing for a nubile young girl was absurd, in Chet Orrindorf it was somehow repellent. Yet old men married mere children back of these frontiers all the time—Wayne knew that.

"You cut my cows out and take them back or by the Eternal, I'll swear out a warrant for you!" Chet raged.

Wayne said wearily, "Tell Pa—and tell that brat to keep his hands in sight. He'll never get out of this canyon alive if he tries anything."

The rider with Chet was a redhead who reminded Wayne of George Candy. He had the same lean, taut face, the same hard mouth, the same chained-wolf's eyes. Those quick eyes saw Candy and one of the new men galloping back toward them. Candy was yelling. "That big-mouth! Anybody that would risk stampedin' a bunch of old cows in this heat! He's the one that done it—old Fatty there!"

"How about it, Chet?" Wayne asked.

There was nothing very bad about Chet, nor nothing very good either. There wasn't much of anything. Wayne's mother had called him a good neighbor but slovenly.

"I seen my brand and got mad," Chet said weakly. "You say Dutch lost them cows? Doggone him—doggone that boy!"

Wayne rode to where the canyon wall sloped upward and looked up at Chet. "Chet, I'll tell you what I told your boys—if there's to be trouble between us, you'll have to start it. I'll go a long way to keep peace. I fought Dutch and Floyd and I'm sincerely sorry I had to do it. I let Dutch steal our meadows and I'm taking care of your cows for you. Now tell me what else you expect me to do."

"Your pa is a woman-stealer," Chet said. "He stole my woman."

"Then go after her like a man! Don't try to drag the whole country into it."

He turned his back on Chet and the redhead and trotted after the herd. All good sense had gone from the world when a man like Chet coveted a woman like Pieta San Juan, but he had done his best.

They rode a few minutes in silence. Then Candy said, "What would you pay a winter hand, Staples?"

"Whatever Orrindorf pays. At least fifty a month—up from that figure. You'll get ten on the coast. Every bum heads for the palm trees this time of year."

Candy said nothing.

THEY TURNED the herd into the brown grass above Sacramento and tailed them over the next range of hills, to make sure they drifted away from, rather than toward, the rickety fences.

In a hot, red sunset they returned to the road. The cook had tied his team and gone to sleep in the shade of his wagon. They stirred him out and headed for Sacramento. There Wayne would draw money from Jack's bank and pay the whole crew off.

He had hoped they'd change their minds. He thought once he was going to get the pick of the bunch anyway, when Candy asked about winter pay. Nothing had come of it.

It was a live town, this Sacramento, this gold capital of the world. He tied in front of the bank, went in and got the money and then, on the sidewalk, paid off his crew. He would have to drive the cook-wagon home, leading his own horse and Jud's. The other horses all belonged to the men who rode them.

"You boys pulled me out of a bad hole," he said. "I'll buy the drinks and then I've got to head up the slope."

Jud thrust his hand out toward Candy. "Pay me, you possum-eatin' sidehill-winder! I told you he wouldn't give us no trouble, didn't I?"

Candy dropped a silver dollar into Jud's hand. He looked at Wayne. "I told the boys we'd have to put up a holler for our money. I reckon Jud knowed you better'n I do. Let's go, Wayne. We're a hell of a long ways from home and I don't aim to get snowed in up in them high passes."

"First let's have a drink," Wayne said.

They painted the town. They had a spree coming and they got it. Along toward daylight Wayne, with the help of three deputy marshals and a brace of bartenders, got his gang together.

Wayne dumped them into the wagon and headed for the high passes. That was the night the sweltering heat broke and a thick ground-fog moved in over Sacramento.

Several times they almost turned over, but Wayne kept going because what was a fog down here could be a snowstorm anywhere above 4,000 feet. That was a different world up there. This warm, wet air would condense quickly up in that world, and once it dumped this moisture in that cold, thin air the Sierra Nevada would be an impenetrable barrier for months to come.

They by-passed Placerville—Hangtown, most of these boys still called it. At Angels Camp, Wayne felt sure enough of them to treat them to supper and a drink. They reached Angels Camp on a Sunday afternoon, when it was still crowded by miners and teamsters and lumbermen who were either enjoying a week-end rest or sobering up after last night. A woman in a boarding-house agreed to

cook chicken and noodles for them. While she was cooking it, he turned the boys loose on the town.

He liked the looks of this town. He let the boys drink while he walked the streets. In a store window he saw some women's clothing. The store was locked but a man was writing at a desk in the rear. Wayne rapped on the door and the merchant let him in. Wayne tried to describe what he wanted—a riding-habit, stylish but decent, something that a nice girl could wear—a nice girl who rode astride.

The merchant seemed to see nothing wrong in a nice girl riding astride. "What size?" he asked, as though this happened daily.

"I haven't any idea," Wayne said.

He bought a habit of wine-colored corduroy, daring by Eastern standards but acceptable here. "Wrap it in plain, heavy paper and tie it with good strong twine," he said. "I'm a long way from home."

He got his half-drunk crew out of town just in time. He kept them going until it was too far for any of them to stagger back to town.

Two nights later they passed the canyon where they had camped the night of Goodhue's death. They kept going. The fog had followed them almost to Angels Camp. They were above it now but it was cold—cold all the time, not just at night and early in the morning. They pushed on through the dark until the thin air told Wayne they were getting close to that treacherous shelf just below the summit.

This part of the trail he was afraid to risk by dark. Jud remembered a turnout where they could camp for the night. It was a small turnout, and the cook's fire showed them how close they were to the edge when all the outfit had been placed.

He slept deeply and when he came awake he wondered why he felt so rested. The blankets were over his head. When he stretched his cramped muscles something wet and cold struck his temple. He lurched out of bed and stared at a snow-covered world on which snow still fell.

The fire was almost smothered but he kicked it into flames and gave his watch a dazed look. Seven o'clock: the snowstorm had postponed the day and they had overslept.

"Roll out, roll out! Hit the grit!" he shouted; and dirty, sleepy, unshaven faces broke through their covering of snow and gaped at him.

They did not stop for breakfast. The old cook had chills and a fever. Candy took over the wagon while Jud and Wayne rode ahead to break trail. The other men followed the wagon.

They never did know when they passed the place where Goodhue had gone over the edge. All they could do was hug the wall.

The steady, quiet snowfall became a shrieking blizzard and they knew they were on the naked scarp of the summit. The horses danced and fought the bit. The loose corners of the wagon-sheets snapped like gunfire in the wind and riders bent

low in the saddle and gulped the thin air, gulping down the instinctive panic that touched them all.

Then the wind died as suddenly as it had risen and the divide was behind them. They hit the first scrubby live-oaks and Jud pointed and said, "I think I remember that piñon yonder—the one that looks like a church candlestick—don't you?"

There was a home-feeling in the very air. Fern's face came to mind, clear-cut, stirring. Her eyes were closed, her lips were parted, her face rose to take his kiss. Home was a woman. Not just any woman—home was Fern, whom he had seen only twice but who now was an urgent necessity.

The snow diminished, stopped. The squeak of wagon-tires on fresh snow, the high-pitched chanting of the delirious cook and the creaking of saddle-leather were the only sounds.

"She's over," Jud said. The clouds thinned out over their heads. They rode on and in a little while Jud said, "About four inches down here, more up there on top. She's closed until May or June. We cut it pretty close, Wayne."

They were home by noon.

There were lights in the bunkhouse as well as in the big house. There were fresh wires across the foot of the canyon and cattle were standing under the aspens. Two of the old sheds had been dragged down from near the horse-corral and now stood in the grove, and in them Wayne saw barley—hundreds of bags of it.

He knew what that meant. The Orrindorfs had taken over another meadow and Ev had brought Sliding S cattle home to the grove because there was no other place for them. Jack Staples had hay enough here for his big horse-herd but not for cattle too. This grain had come in from Nevada. It had to come from there, and Wayne thought with a shudder of what it had cost, laid down here.

They cared for their horses. The crew went to the bunkhouse. Lennie Brody opened the door of the big house just as Wayne climbed the steps to the porch.

"I thought I heard somebody," he yawned.

"You're a dead man if you don't get some hot grub on the table," Wayne told him savagely.

He was in the big wooden bath-tub in the room off the kitchen when Ev came in.

"Which one?" Wayne asked.

Ev sat down wearily. "Black Skull. We had to set there under the trees and watch 'em run our stuff out and put theirs in. I knowed you wouldn't stand for a fight and there was six of 'em this time—Floyd and Earl and you remember that little gunnie you run out of here—that Johnny Cuesta? He was with the Orrindorfs."

"They're welcome to him," Wayne granted.

"Watch out for Cuesta, Wayne. He gives me the creeps." Ev drummed thoughtfully on his own knee as Wayne dressed. "We ain't in good shape

for the winter but we could be worse. I was across the valley this morning. One more snow and they won't bring no more CO herds over here, that's sure as hell. Did you bring any money back with you?"

"I've got a few dollars left—why?"

"I haven't got any money to pay off the boys. Your Pa didn't even leave any in the safe in his room."

Wayne stopped putting it off and asked, "Where's Pa?"

"Bear Meadows."

"Since when?"

"Le's see—this is Thursday. He went in a week ago Saturday for the church supper and we ain't seen him since."

It snowed most of the night and by morning a foot and a half lay in the aspen grove—a record for this early, Ev said. "You don't need to worry about the Orrindorfs no more. The only way they could get another critter over here would be to lead it by the neck around through town. Now all we got to do is worry about fences and keepin' the water-holes open this winter, and we got plenty of men for that."

"All right," said Wayne. "I'll try once more to get Pa to come home and pay attention to business."

"And get me some money. These boys'll be over the hill to Nevada if they think they ain't goin' to get paid."

As Wayne was saddling, George Cuesta came to him. "Ev says you had a run-in with Johnny Cuesta."

"More or less," Wayne said.

"I thought you didn't like to fight."

"Don't worry about Cuesta."

Wayne stepped up into the saddle. Candy looked up at him and said, "Wayne, let me handle Cuesta for you," and Wayne thought, seeing the look on his face, how Cuesta himself had probably looked like this Missouri kid at the same age.

"What good would that do, George? What are you trying to prove? That you're faster on the draw than Cuesta? No matter how good you are, there's always somebody better. I haven't met him yet but I will, if I keep on. So will Cuesta. So will you. And what does it prove, George?"

He shook his horse into a run through the deep snow and did not look back. This tough little Missourian was, come to think of it, the best friend he had ever had.

Under Wayne's arm as he rode was a paper parcel tied with heavy twine. There was no sky this morning, only an opaque haze. The snow began falling before Wayne was out of sight of the grove and he put the package under his coat to save it from the fat, wet flakes.

Bear Meadows looked very small and lonely under this immense weight of snow. The canyon



corral back of Joey's place was empty. Wayne did not want to leave his horse out in the open. He trotted down to the other end of the street to the livery stable. Ernie Sabo, the liveryman, was contentedly patching harness in the cozy warmth of his barn. Ernie had a good business here. This country looked empty but in the summer there was more demand for his horses than he had horses to fill.

"When's your dad goin' to bring back my good top-buggy and gray team?" Ernie asked.

"Didn't even know he had them," Wayne said in surprise. "Where'd he go with them?"

It was Ernie's turn to look surprised. "Hasn't he got them out home?"

"Why would he keep them out there? He's got more horses than he can feed now."

Ernie scratched his head, looking embarrassed. "I just thought maybe he—you know, drove 'em home while he was tight and—you know—no offense meant. He had a fight with Chet over that girl and I thought maybe he got a black eye, or somethin', and didn't want to come in till it healed."

Wayne felt an apprehensive chill. "A fight?"

"Just a fist-fight. I don't like to carry talk, Wayne, but it's all over town—you can't help hear it." Ernie scratched his head again. "This beats me! Wonder if he went down to Angels Camp? Chet just came from there."

"So did I. I met Chet but not Pa. I might miss a man on a horse but not in a buggy, not with those flashy grays."

"He must've went to Coliseum, then."

"Why would he go there?"

"He does a lot of business in Nevada. Oh, well—Jack's good for it—I won't lose anything. I just wish he'd let a man know before keepin' a team away so long."

Wayne took his brown-paper parcel and went out into the snow, more angry, more worried than he cared to have Ernie know. He remembered Goodhew going over the edge and he remembered how those fine, fast grays had stepped out when he saw his father driving them with Pieta San Juan.

He stopped thinking about that and puzzled over what could keep his father in Nevada so long. The pass to Coliseum went up only to 7,200 feet and it was wider, not so winding and precipitously dangerous. It closed in several times each winter but one of Ernie Sabo's jobs was to hitch up his six big draft-teams and buck the road open with a push-plow.

He went back to Joey Rose's place, carrying his parcel. Joey sat reading by the light of a pink-shaded lamp, a relic of this saloon's more prosperous days. Wayne asked if he could borrow enough money to pay off the crew.

"Sure," Joey smiled. "They'll spend it all here anyway."

Wayne leaned on the bar. "Joey, where did Pa go?"

"Isn't he out at the place?"

Wayne went cold. "No. He hasn't been there for a week and a half. Ev said he came in for some kind of a church supper a week ago Saturday."

"I haven't seen him since then either," Joey said, and Wayne did not like the look in his eyes. It held back something Joey had been about to say. "Why don't you go see Troy Utley about it?"

"Why Troy? Joey, what's this about Pa having a fight with Chet Orrindorf?"

"It's not my place to talk, Wayne. All right, all right—they did have a fight. Nobody saw it that I know of. Chet was wandering around here early the next morning with his glasses broken, half blind and not very sober. Earl came in and took him home. . . . But you talk to Troy about it."

"Was it about the girl?"

"Your father took her to the supper, that's all I know. The supper was up at the old bunkhouse dining room of the Metal Queen and that's where the fight was—after the supper. That's all I know and that's all I'm going to say, Wayne. You go see Troy."

The parcel became heavy and conspicuous in Wayne's hand. He remembered the double eagle he had left with Fern.

## 7

TROY OPENED the door at his knock. Over Troy's shoulder Wayne saw Fern in the kitchen door and a wild sort of elation surged through him. Fern's face began to shine and she came toward him, holding her hands together to stop their trembling.

Troy pulled him inside, shouting, "You got back! I was afeared this storm would cut you off at the pass."

"It was a narrow squeak, Troy," Wayne said. He tried to catch Fern's eye, to warn her with a quick glance at the parcel. "How are you, Fern?"

She misunderstood. She reached for the package with a little incredulous scream. "For me? Really for me?"

He stood there like a guilty fool while she tore it open. She began crying when she saw the rich wine-colored corduroy—crying and hugging it to her cheek as though she had forgotten the feel of new, pretty things. That look made it worthwhile to Wayne.

"You remembered!"

She held it against her and spun on tiptoe with a graceful sweep that made her skirts swirl across her hips. Her feet were bare in soft brown moccasins and the flash of her white legs filled Wayne with a queer mystical excitement.

"Well, now, Wayne!" Troy said. Wayne met his eyes and Troy went on firmly, deliberately, "That shore was nice of you. Reminds me of how

you used to run out to meet the wagon when you was a kid. You knowed old Troy wouldn't forget!"

Fern ran through the kitchen to her little lean-to bedroom. The curtains raked shut.

"What's this about Pa and Chet fighting?" Wayne asked.

"I told you they would." Troy reddened. His eyes burned. "I kep' them old studs apart as long as I could but I ain't takin' no more from either one of 'em. Your Pa don't own me, Wayne! I'm responsible to the attorney general of this State and I don't have to take no more talk like I took from Jack last week. I'll tell you what I told Earl Orrindorf—keep your Pa at home or I'll put him under peace bond as soon as I can get a wire to Sacramento."

"Pa isn't at home," Wayne said.

Troy looked startled. "How's that?"

"He hasn't been home since a week ago Saturday. No one seems to know where he is."

"Wayne, I hate to tell you this but Chet Orrindorf says he killed your Pa."

Wayne came to his feet quickly. "Killed him?"

"Now wait, Wayne! I never paid no attention to him—who'd think the likes of Chet Orrindorf could kill your Pa with his fists? But that's what he says. I taken it for granted your dad is out home all this time. I—I wish I knowed—"

"Troy, what happened?"

In his casual, disorderly way, Troy had done a good job of running down the truth about the fight—Wayne had to admit that. His respect for the old man increased. Improvident old bluffer he might be, but Troy had good sense, he knew people and he had iron in him. Neither the Orrindorfs nor the Staples could push him beyond a certain point.

The church supper was an annual affair, the last time Zeb Gray could count on getting everybody together before winter closed in. People came from as far as Coliseum and other Nevada towns, and even the Washoes turned out. The food was brought by the women, whatever they had—beef and pork, venison and other game, fruit pies, cakes and cookies. The supper was held in the biggest building at the Metal Queen—indeed, the biggest building in Bear Meadows.

All three Orrindorf boys were there. Meanwhile their father was down at Joey's drinking steadily because Jack Staples was taking Pieta San Juan to the dance. The three Orrindorf boys had left early after failing to get their father to go home.

After the supper, Troy said, Jack had left the team tied while he walked Pieta the short distance to the Rodriguez house. Troy and Fern saw them go. Troy took Fern home and then went on down to Joey's place to make sure the hard drinkers did not cause trouble and spoil Zeb's party. Chet was there, drinking and weeping and cursing Jack Staples for a woman-stealer, but there was no trouble. Troy went home.

"The next day Chet was still stompin' around town, drunk as a hoot-owl, with his glasses gone and him so blind he couldn't see to hit the ground with his hat in three throws. Near as I can find out; after I left Joey's, Chet went up there and waited by the livery rig until your Pa came back. Chet claimed he knocked your Pa over the tailings-dump into the bottom of the canyon. I never paid no attention because who in hell in his right mind would believe a thing like that?" Troy said.

"Did you look for—" Wayne had to make him say it—"for Pa's body?"

"No, but Earl claims he did. He come into town to take his Pa home."

"Let's go up there and take a look."

"Wayne, the snow will be ten feet deep below that tailings-dump. I hate to say this, but if your Pa is dead up there, we won't find him until spring."

Wayne felt an unexpectedly sharp twist of sorrow as he thought of that tough old man lying ignominiously dead down there under that snow.

"Troy, have you talked to that girl?"

"No. The fight was after Jack took her home—if there was one."

"Let's go talk to her now."

They rode over to the Rodriguez house, a comfortable brown cottage with the long narrow porch typical of mining-town architecture. Pieta San Juan was in the side yard, taking stiffly frozen laundry from a clothesline.

The girl turned as though to get into the house before they could stop her. Then she seemed to think better of it. A small brown dog came out from under the house, yapping insolently, and crawled between her feet as she waited for them by the side door.

"Be quiet!" the girl said; and the dog subsided into shrill, whining snarls. The girl's big velvety eyes came up to Wayne.

"You wanted to see me?" she asked, quite calmly. She had not a trace of accent—unless, Wayne thought, it was the accent of the educated Easterner.

"Yes, about my father. Have you seen him recently?"

"Not since the church supper."

"Have you any idea where he is?"

"Why—at home, I suppose."

"He hasn't been home. No one has seen him since the evening of the church supper, Miss San Juan."

"No one has seen him? But—but that's impossible!"

"I wish it were." He told her what they had learned so far.

She turned toward the door. The little dog at her feet turned with her, raising his hackles and snarling back at Wayne.

"You think something is wrong?" she asked.

"Chet says he killed him."

"I don't believe that. Each of us has a way to

go, and that is not his way. That's not true—I feel it.”

She put her hand on the latch. Wayne touched her arm and said, “Miss San Juan, I don’t want to butt in, but it’s said you came up here frankly in search of a rich husband. What’s holding you up? Why don’t you marry one or the other of them and get it over with.”

The huge eyes widened. “You would not care?”

“I’m in favor of whatever my father wants—whether it’s best for him or not. I don’t know where Pa is. I’m like you—I can’t think Chet killed him—yet maybe I’ll get over that too. If he comes back, I’ll not stand in your way.”

She opened the door and slipped in. The dog slid in between her feet. Her voice came back over the dog’s snarl, “He never asked me to marry him.”

They went into Joey’s place and Troy said, “Joey, it shore don’t look good.”

“I was afraid of that,” Joey said.

“You didn’t tell me Chet said he’d killed Pa,” Wayne said.

“It wasn’t my place. I thought, like everyone else, that it was the rum speaking until you bowled me over by saying he wasn’t at home. He was my friend, Wayne.”

Wayne put some money on the bar. He shook his head. “He still is. Joey, the girl’s right—Chet didn’t kill Pa.”

“Where is he then?” Troy asked.

“Where’s the gray team and buggy?” Wayne countered.

Joey set out the whiskey and glasses. “What worries nuc is this—Jack drew a new will the day you left for Sacramento the last time. Why would he do that?”

“He had a reason—a reason for everything.”

“I’ve got it in my safe, Wayne. Why don’t you look at it?”

“No.”

“Here comes Earl Orrindorf,” Troy said.

“Earl and one of their riders. You ask him about what he seen up there.”

The sound, the sight, the very scent of an Orrindorf was unendurable today. Wayne pushed his drink back untasted. “No, I’m going home, Troy. I’ll just get into trouble if I stay here.”

“I ask you man to man to talk to him. He told me fair and square that he thought you was tryin’ to do the right thing. Damn it, Wayne, you and Earl between you can put an end to these hard feelings right now,” Troy pleaded.

“I’ll wait,” Wayne said.

Troy opened the back door and said, “Howdy, Earl. You come in here and talk to Wayne Staples man to man, tell him what you told me.”

Earl turned to face Wayne with the clumsiness typical of all these rawboned Orrindorfs. He wore a tight oilskin slicker and the handle of his .45 made an angular lump under it.

Wayne worked his finger tips against the heels of his palms, fretting out his raw nerves. He turned lazily with his elbow on the bar, his gun in plain sight.

“Hello, Earl,” he said. “Did it snow much out your way?”

Earl kept watching him intently as he said, “I’ll kiss a pig if it didn’t! I never seen so much snow this early.”

“Troy says you looked all over the tailings-dump for Pa.”

Earl swallowed. “Yes. I don’t know what Pap was drinkin’ that night but it shore had him seein’ things! I tromped up and down that gully for an hour. Maybe somebody fought there but there wasn’t no sign of Jack and there wasn’t no sign of his team. There just wasn’t no sign of nothin’, Staples—I swear!”

Wayne nodded. “Understand your dad insists that he killed Pa, though.”

Earl threw out his big hands. “I don’t know what to think, Staples. Pap is plumb childsh.”

“I don’t think Pa is dead,” Wayne said. “Earl, I don’t believe my father and yours have enough brains left between them to wad a shotgun, so I won’t even guess where Pa went. I just want to say that as far as I’m concerned, this business can drop right here.”

The suspicion and distrust left Earl’s face. “Fifty-fifty is a good enough deal for me. Troy said I could talk to you, Staples. All right—I’ll take your word—and so will Floyd and Dutch or I’ll break somebody’s back!”

Wayne did not want to shake hands, but Earl started across the floor with his big hand out, and Wayne pushed himself away from the bar to meet him.

“Watch out!” Troy Udey yelled.

It was almost a scream, a high, shrill, womanish one. The back door stood open and in it was a little, dirty man with a red nose and runover boots and two guns belted high around his stomach. Earl whirled on his heels and shouted something, an incoherent and totally useless order.

Earl tried to stop it but it could not be stopped. It had started too long ago, when Wayne talked to Johnny Cuesta as though he were an ordinary range bum. Wayne turned to face Cuesta, blaming the little gunman no more than he blamed himself, and the overbearing Staples blood that had made him talk that way to a fellow human being. He heard Johnny’s soft, cool voice and saw, across the length of the saloon, that strange return of his springy, able, malevolent youth. The old bum became a young killer before Wayne Staples’ very eyes.

“I told you, Staples, that you and me wasn’t through.”

Wayne saw Johnny go for his guns. He dropped to his knees and threw himself on his left side and kept rolling, knowing that Johnny’s arms

and eyes and nerves could not possibly be as good as they once had been.

He heard the slugs rake the floor and snap through the hardwood of the bar with a vicious *k'tch* sound. He took his time because he knew now that he was right—he had the distance and that was all he needed. All Johnny Cuesta had ever had was speed, and when a man got his first shot away the advantage of speed was lost.

He saw Johnny step toward him and thumb his hammers back. He lifted the gun and even then gave Johnny another chance. He saw Johnny's thumbs go down from the triggers before he pressed his own trigger.

Johnny dropped both guns. Wayne got up as Johnny went down. Johnny hit the floor on his back. One of his legs doubled up and then straightened out, the worn boot making a scratching sound on the floor. His fingers crooked tight and then relaxed, like the claws of a chicken with its head cut off.

Wayne could not look any more. He put his gun on the bar and ran to the door. He leaned over the porch and held onto a two-by-four post with both arms and threw up in the snow. Behind him he heard Earl yell, "What'll we do now, Troy? How can I hold Floyd and Dutch back after this? Lord, Lord, I wish this hadn't happened!"

## 8

WELL, HE KNEW NOW. Lying in bed, staring out of his window at the white aspens and the white snow and the white moon, he knew how it felt to have killed a man.

Finally he slept. He came out long after the sun was bright in a gaudy blue sky. Wayne had tried to talk to Ev about it last night and Lennie had sat there listening. He understood, whether Ev did or not.

"I got some ham and mush to fry, Wayne," Lennie said. "Yaller-meal mush, like you like."

"I'm not hungry, thanks," Wayne said. "Where's Ev?"

"Dunno. He and the hull crew went some'ts early this morning."

Wayne followed the fresh tracks of the crew and at the first rise the splendor of the valley lifted his spirits and rang a sudden curtain down on yesterday, on all his yesterdays. He never would get over killing Johnny Cuesta, but when he saw this valley under the snow, its upthrust black rock weals glowering more blackly and its lofty white peaks soaring up more whitely than ever before, he knew he could live with himself.

Tracks branched off one at a time, where Ev had detailed men to look for storm-bound strays. A man came riding toward him and Wayne waited for him, recognizing George Candy's light and

reckless seat in the saddle. They trotted along together.

"I offered to handle that for you," Candy said. "I know you did."

"I never killed a man but it wouldn't bother me none."

Wayne shook his head impatiently. "Where'd Ev go?"

"He went to Shady with Jud and Chuck."

"Why Shady?"

"I don't know."

"I'll bet I know," Wayne said, "and if I'm right—"

He shook his horse into a run. Candy followed him. They topped a rise and saw the CO herd strung out on a hillside, miles from Shady, moving steadily toward the southeast. Jud was riding point, sitting twisted in the saddle so he could look back and judge his pace. That was Ev riding up and down beside the herd, keeping them from drifting downhill. Chuck followed, swinging his rope at stragglers.

Ev saw them and waved for them. "Candy, get up there and give Jud a hand. He knows where he's goin' but just in case anybody gets in his way—"

Candy dashed away, his horse kicking snow back over Wayne. Ev trotted down to where Wayne sat. Ev's eyes were watering and his nose ran but he was enjoying this hugely.

"What's the idea, Ev?"

The old man cackled. "I'm givin' Dutch some cows. We found a hole where we could still get through onto CO grass. It'll snow again tonight. Don't you see, Wayne? Once we get through them draws and it snows in behind this herd, no power on earth can get it back till spring. I'd shore like to see Dutch's face in the morning."

Wayne held his temper. "Let's start those cows back," he said.

"This is your chanst!" Ev shouted. "You got to hit people like the Orrindorfs where it hurts—in their pocketbooks. Why should we grain our cows while he winters on our hay?" He rode closer and argued, "Wayne, you ain't goin' to get along with that bunch anyhow—not after Cuesta."

"I will get along with them."

"We can't get back with the herd. It's too late."

Wayne was too tired to argue. "All right, we're in for it I suppose. Go ahead—but next time, ask."

Ev would pout for a week now, Wayne supposed, watching the old man dash up the slope. Wayne followed idly.

Candy rode ahead and floated over the ridge out of sight. His yell came back, "No you don't, mister! Just stay right where you are."

One of the Orrindorfs answered. Wayne spurred up the slope, scattering cattle recklessly. The first of the cattle had spilled over the ridge

and were shambling awkwardly down the steep grade. Its leaders were wallowing in snow six feet deep at the bottom.

This was the last ravine and then the long, lovely floor of the Orrindorf valley spread before him. Just across the ravine sat Dutch Orrindorf and two men, strangers to Wayne. On Wayne's side of the ravine sat Candy and Jud.

The herd gathered speed as it streamed down the slope. The momentum of the herd pushed its leaders through that last barrier, the snow-filled ditch. They fanned out past Dutch, whose freshly-shaven, sleekly pink face had a look of comical consternation.

Dutch stood up in the stirrups and shook the mitten from his right hand. Then he seemed to remember Cuesta. He sat down and warmed the bare hand in his armpit.

"You can't get away with this, Wayne," he said. "You can't let cattle out in this country this time of year."

"Then take care of them," Wayne said. "This wasn't my idea but it's too late now. We'll help move them on down to your hay, but then they're your problem."

"Listen to reason, Wayne," Dutch pleaded. "We just haven't got the feed. We're overstocked bad."

Wayne looked at Ev. "Are they really that bad off?"

Ev looked away. "Well, whose fault is it?"

Wayne reached for him. He caught Ev by the shoulder and made him turn around. "Don't lie to me! I told you I didn't want to lose any cows for anybody."

"They got feed enough," Ev said.

"You lie!" Wayne let go of him. "Dutch, I told Earl we could settle this next spring. Tell him that still goes. Now let's get these cattle back to Shady. I don't know if we've got time before dark, but let's try."

Dutch and his two men helped start the scattered herd back on its own trail. It was hard work. They were hungry men, bad-tempered men. They swore at each other continuously, but they kept crowding the herd because Wayne kept crowding them. It had to be that way.

The sun slid down toward the west and the gray overhang oozed up to meet it. Shadow covered the valley swiftly. Dutch Orrindorf hated Wayne and his men hated Wayne and his own men hated Wayne worst of all, but he kept one eye on that thickening haze overhead and snarled at them the way his father would have snarled.

They kept the herd moving. He drove the crews like slaves for the sake of the dumb beasts who had been senselessly stirred out of their comfortable winter meadow and now had to be hurried back into it. The snow began falling just as the first cow lumbered through the gap in the stone fence at Shady.

Dutch helped close the gap in the fence. They all got back on their horses and sat looking at each other, each man thinking sullenly how after all this hard work they were right back where they started, thanks to Wayne Staples.

"Thanks, Staples," Dutch said at last. It came hard.

"That's all right. Remember what I said to tell Earl!"

"Well, Earl don't run things, you know."

Wayne felt in his pocket for his mitten. "There's no reason for us ever to catch any of your people on our range the rest of the winter. We'll see to your cattle and fix up a deal next spring, when nobody's mad. One thing more, Dutch. If I were you, I believe I'd stay out of the Washoes way. You know why."

Dutch tensed and he yelled, "What did that woman tell you about me?"

"What woman?"

"Fern Utley! I told her not to spread any more of her lies about me. If she told you I was—"

Wayne struck out blindly with the mittens and spurred his horse forward. Dutch's horse spraddled backward under the impact. Its shod right hind foot rang against the stone fence, showering sparks. The mittens caught Dutch across the mouth. He swore and leaned away from the blows and lost one of his reins.

Wayne slapped him again and again with the mittens. Dutch's horse went up on its hind legs and Dutch fell out of the saddle. He got his thick legs under him and stood up, ludicrously snow-covered, dribbling blood from the corner of his mouth.

Wayne pulled his horse back and pocketed his mittens, wondering why he had never realized before what a coward Dutch was. The big fellow lived a cringing life of minute-to-minute fear, and he went from man to man to pick fights only to keep other people from knowing what he knew about himself.

This crazy assault of Wayne's had caught him before he could shore up his nerve. His yellow streak broke through.

Dutch was, in his way, the bravest man Wayne had ever known. To shrink from violence with every atom of his nature and yet make himself seek it at every opportunity—that took guts. Wayne's fury died as he saw the shamed human being standing there with his yellow streak showing.

"Watch your tongue, Dutch," he said calmly.

Dutch turned abruptly, got back in the saddle, and plunged away.

It had never occurred to Wayne before that Fern and Dutch would know each other, but they would—of course they would! The girl's face came back vividly to his mind, and it was raw animal instinct that made him twist with a jealousy so sharp that it was like anguish in his guts.

THE STORM was only an excuse for a holiday; the real reason was that he had to know. A girl he had seen only twice had become a frantic craving, a necessity. When the sun rose in a coldly glittering blue sky, he had an excuse.

"Ev, we had a rough day yesterday. We've had it rough right along and so have the boys. Let's all go to town. I'll stand the drinks."

They turned their horses into Joey's canyon corral, making the first tracks in the fresh snow there. From the upstairs of Joey's place came the crackling odor of frying bacon. Joey was just up. He came out for a chunk of firewood and waited by the back door to let them in.

"You boys are pretty early," he said. "I haven't even built a fire. . . . Just a minute, Wayne. Can I talk to you?"

The boys trooped in through the back door. Joey picked up a chunk of wood and looked at Wayne. "It's none of my business, but I think you'd want to know. There's some bad gossip going around town about you."

"What kind of gossip?"

"That you bought clothes for Fern Utley—that you gave her money. Wayne, you might as well stick a knife in Troy's back as do that."

Wayne exploded, "Our families were friends. We played together as kids. If a man can't make a friendly gift—"

Joey caught his arm and said, "It's the girl I am thinking of—the girl alone. You can leave this valley any time but she has to stay. So does this talk, and the Orrindorfs are spiteful people."

"The Orrindorfs?"

There came that twist of jealousy again, like a knife. Joey said, "You knew, didn't you, that Dutch and Fern used to go together? They did, until Pieta San Juan came to town. There's always nasty talk when a man throws a girl over. Now this story comes out—that you gave Fern money and clothing. You know what they're saying, don't you? That Dutch probably knew what he was doing when he dropped Fern. That she's—well, that kind of a girl. What makes it worse, I think, is that Dutch is sorry now that he ever left her. That Mexican girl just twisted him around her finger. Now that it's too late, he knows better. But he's spiteful, Wayne—spiteful!"

It was odd how the irrational jealousy and anguish died in Wayne as he listened to this narrow-minded mountain saloon-keeper. His mind got a good, steady grip on things. So Fern and Dutch used to "go together." That was a small-town term, it had a small-town meaning. *Well*, he thought. *Well!* Her poverty had been worse than he had thought.

Wayne said, "There's one thing I can do."

"Killing Dutch won't help matters."

"Didn't I make it clear to you, Joey?" Wayne said. "I'm not going to fight the Orrindorfs—over this or anything else. I'm going to ask Fern to marry me."

Joey smiled. "I was hoping that would be it. A girl who becomes engaged is entitled to her ring on the same day, don't you think? Wait—let me stir up the fire for the boys and give them their drink, and I'll bring you a ring from my safe. Ah, Wayne, it was only the girl I was thinking of all along!"

He went inside and clanked the stove as he filled it. He joshed the boys as he set out their drinks. He came out with a small box in his hand. Its rich green plush cover had faded and its leather corners and latch were cracked with age, and it opened with difficulty in Joey's smooth, strong hands.

There were only three things in it. Joey touched them lightly, one at a time. "The ring and pearls belonged to my wife. They're worth more than you may think. The ring is small but it's a good emerald. Take it, Wayne. The pearls Fern can have on her wedding day, the brooch when I die. The brooch was my mother's."

Wayne kept it casual because Joey would want it that way. He dropped the ring carelessly into his pocket. "There's one other thing you may be able to do, Joey. No girl should have it said of her that a man threw her over—a man like Dutch, or any other man. If Fern turns me down; see that word of it gets around—that she could have married a Staples but turned him down flat."

"It will make you look like a fool."

Wayne shrugged. "Just do it, Joey."

His mind at last had a good, firm, steady grip on things. Up here food tasted better, and to stand by a warm stove warmed a man deeper, and the love of a woman was an urgent want. These mountains taught a man—sometimes against his will—the three deep needs of his nature: food, warmth and a woman.

What puzzled Wayne was how this gossip had started. People might see Fern in the riding habit and put two and two together—but when had she worn it? And how could they know about the money? But it was Wayne's fault and the start of the talk was not important. It's ending was.

He saw Troy Utley come out of the front door of his little house. They met in Troy's small front yard and stood looking at each other. There was no way one man could explain to another his carelessness in a thing like this.

Troy said finally, "Hello, Wayne. Get much of a storm out your way last night?"

He was reserving judgment, giving Wayne a chance. "Not much," Wayne said. "Troy, I'm glad of a chance to talk to you alone."

"I thought it was about time."

"I came up here to ask Fern to marry me," Wayne said.



Troy kept his dignity, even as the tears came to his eyes. "She can if she wants to, but she ain't beholden."

"I would be the one beholden," Wayne said.

Troy nodded and swallowed his tears and walked on down the canyon, keeping his dignity and his distance, reserving judgment until this unfinished business should be finished. The less a man had, the more he cherished it. His shaggy, shabby, straight-backed figure disappeared in the trees that screened the creek.

Fern opened the door just as Wayne reached for it, and the unexpected lustrous beauty of the girl made him catch his breath. She had on a new pink dress. She held the full cotton skirt wide at the sides for him to see and backed away on tiptoe, her lips parted, her eyes bright, her whole lovely face glowing with breathless, rollicking invitation. He had, he realized, never seen her look light-hearted and gay before.

He closed the door and went after her, and she stopped with her back against the opposite wall and put her hands out to keep him away. First she wanted him to see.

"Do you like it?"

"I like you." His voice went gravely. He reached for her and she came into his arms and her mouth came up eagerly to meet his.

He knew now how that gossip had started. Fern had gone down to the shoddy store here, where only the Indians did much trading, and had put down that shining gold double-eagle for the pink material for this dress. It was foolish—of course it was foolish!

"Fern darling," he whispered, "will you marry me?"

She pulled away from him. The lighthearted look went swiftly. "Because people are talking about me? That's my fault. I knew they would but I just didn't care. I still don't!"

He stared at her. "Why, you little devil!"

She tossed her head. "You were kind and good and generous. You and I know the truth, whether anyone else does. You don't have to marry me."

His voice went out of control again as he reached for her. He got his arms around her and crushed the rebellion out of her and whispered, "Yes I do. You know me, Fern. You know how little I care about what anyone says. I just want to marry you, that's all."

"Why? Say it, say it!"

"Because I love you. I want you."

"I love you too," she cried. "I want you too—so bad, so bad!"

The pink dress rustled as she rose on tiptoe to kiss him, taking his cheeks and holding his head steady while she put her sweet, wet lips up to his again and again. He caught her fingers and kissed them, and that's when he remembered the ring. He took it from his pocket and slipped it on her finger.

It was a different kind of a kiss this time. This time it was Fern who broke it off.

"Let's go for a ride! I haven't had a chance to wear my new habit yet. You promised!"

"All right. I'll go get a couple of horses while you change."

He got his own horse and Candy's nimble, tractable little pony. Fern was full of gay excitement. She talked continuously as he boosted her into the saddle and adjusted Candy's stirrups to fit her. He mounted his own horse.

"Where shall we go?" Fern cried.

"Let's parade the town. They like to talk—let's give them something to talk about."

She laughed. "You are a Staples, aren't you?"

They rode down the canyon and turned up the street and rode to the end. But there were houses still higher on this hill too, and here also the snow was roughly mounded over the debris thrown out by the miners as they gutted the steep slope. Fern pointed out the cabins that were still in use.

They emerged at last on the very spine of the ridge. The town huddled in the deep canyon below them like a picture-postcard Swiss village.

The wind up here was cold, strong, insistent. It whipped the heavy corduroy skirts of Fern's habit against her hoots. It made her eyes glisten, her cheeks glow. The horses stirred restlessly as they tried to turn their tails to it. Fern leaned from the saddle toward Wayne.

"Kiss me. I dare you!" she teased. "You're afraid someone will see you."

He kissed her primly. Her lips were cold and firm and sweet. Wayne sighed.

"I suppose I had better go down and rescue my boys from the demon rum," he said. "Better not try to ride down. Turn your horse loose and let him find his own way down."

The horses were waiting patiently at the foot of the slope. Wayne held out his arms and Fern ran the last few steps to him. Her arms locked around him and her lips came up in another of those wanton kisses that rocked his senses. She pulled loose and took him by the hand and led him to an old sheet-iron shanty that stood back of all the other Metal Queen buildings.

"Come in here and kiss me again that way," she said exultantly. "Where no one can see, Wayne. You may go away and leave me tomorrow. We may both be dead by tomorrow. Anything can happen, Wayne. Kiss me once more like that."

She opened the door and pulled him inside. She came into his arms but he did not kiss her.

Lying on one of the heavy timbers that framed the shed was a tobacco pouch of heavy cowhide, stained by use until its Indian penwork design was almost indecipherable. Wayne unrolled it and smelled the tobacco in it; and if that familiar odor had not been enough, there on the ledge, where it had been covered by the pouch, was a little brass box with a mother-of-pearl cover. He opened it.

Inside was a flint-and-steel "pipe igniter" with a wick, a patented spring device in vogue some 20 years earlier.

Fern clutched his arm. "What are they?"

"They're Pa's," Wayne said unsteadily, seeing Jack Staples clearly in his mind. "I knew he wasn't dead. Look, Fern—he spent a lot of time in here. Here's where he sat. He emptied his pipe two or three times—and he doesn't smoke much! And he left here in such a hurry that he forgot his tobacco-pouch and igniter."

"When could he have been here?" Fern asked, round-eyed.

"I don't know. Fern, your dad had better see this."

They rode down the canyon, and near her house he heard Ev screeching furiously at someone down there on the street. Someone else was yelling—an Orrindorf, but he could not tell which one. He looked back at Fern and said, "You go home. Those wild boys of mine might cause trouble."

"No, I'm going with you. Dad's there."

No use arguing with her. He freed his horse at the bottom of the canyon and ran around in front of the saloon. There, in the very place where he had fought Floyd, his outfit and the Orrindorfs faced each other with Troy Utley holding down an uneasy truce between them.

Wayne went up to Troy. He took the pouch and igniter from his pocket.

"Troy, look what Fern and I found. Did you ever see these things before?"

"Why, they're your pa's," Troy said. "Where'd you find 'em?" Wayne told him and Troy frowned. "Now why would he do that? At least we know he's alive, but why don't he come home—why does he worry us thisaway? He's up to somethin'. I never knowed Jack Staples when he didn't know exactly what he was doin'."

Earl reached over Troy's shoulder and took the pouch in his hand. "That's Jack's. I was with him in Placerville when he bought it. Staples, now I reckon you know I told the truth when I said he wasn't dead up at the mine."

"I never thought anything else," said Wayne.

Chet had taken the tobacco pouch from Troy and was holding it up to his nearsighted eyes. "I thought I killed him," he was saying softly. "I thought I killed old Jack. My best friend! I kin sleep now of nights."

No one had noticed the girl who sat in a new wine-colored riding habit with her hands folded over the horn of her saddle, a new ring twinkling on her finger.

He went over to Fern and gave her his hand. "Your father will take you home, dear. You won't mind, will you?"

All Fern said was, "No, I understand." All she did was give him her foot and step down from the saddle. She smiled good-by and touched his sleeve lightly with her fingers—that was all.

But they knew. Off came their hats, and now it did not matter if the whole world knew that Wayne had bought the clothes she was wearing. This was the gold-fields and she was a gold-fields girl. There was not a man here who did not believe in the rightness of whatever she did.

They were almost home when Ev reined in. The others looked at him questioning.

"By ginger," said Ev. "maybe that Indian rumor was right, at that."

"What rumor?" said Wayne.

"Why, the one I just heard in town this afternoon. I give it no heed at the time. One of them Washoe Indians hereabouts told somebody or other he'd seen your pa headed for Coliseum the night after the fight with Chet."

"You believe that?"

"I dunno," Ev said. "But the Washoe is supposed to have claimed he seen him go over the east pass about daylight."

"With the gray team and buggy?"

"Dunno. But with that team he'd make Coliseum by noon easy. The mail-driver does it all the time."

Wayne stared at Ev coldly. After a moment Ev dropped his eyes.

"You knew all this was important," said Wayne evenly. "But you weren't going to tell me—until your conscience got the better of you. Why not, Ev?"

Ev swallowed and shifted in his saddle. "Well," he said. "Well—aw, hell, Wayne, you know damn well the old man's better off away from here and that woman for a while. And I figured if you knew where he'd gone, you'd go get him."

Wayne swung his horse around. "See you later," he said. "I'm going back to town and look at Pa's will."

## 10

**I**'LL GO WITH YOU," Candy said. Wayne shook his head and the Missourian snarled, "I didn't ask you—I told you. You don't know if the Orrindorfs went home or not. That old windbag Utley can't handle them people."

Wayne smiled grimly. "Come on, then," he said.

They headed back toward Bear Meadows.

When they entered the saloon, Joey sat beside his stove, reading. "Troy told you people to go home," he said. "He got the Orrindorfs to go only because you had already left town. You shouldn't impose on the old man that way."

"We're not looking for trouble," Wayne said. "I'll take a look at Pa's will now."

Joey's eyes narrowed. "Why now?"

Wayne told him what he had heard from Ev. "Pa has a reason for everything he does. Apparently, after taking the girl home, he spent several

hours sitting in that sheet-iron shanty. Then he went to Coliseum and hasn't come back. I want to know why."

Without a word Joey went to the big cast-iron safe in the corner. There had been a time when to find 50 or 60 thousand dollars in raw gold in this safe was not unusual. Now there was a small bag of coins taken in over the bar, a little casket covered with worn green plush, and a red envelope.

Wayne opened the envelope with his knife and took out three folded sheets of paper. He spread them on the bar.

No one who had ever seen Jack Staples' strong, cramped handwriting could have contested this will. And the words were Jack's too. There were no legal flourishes, but this will would stand up in any court. Jack Staples had always known how to make his exact meaning clear.

First he named Wayne, Joey Rose and the cashier of his bank in Sacramento "to wind up my affairs and share out my propiety as I direct below."

Then came miscellaneous bequests, small enough in view of Jack's riches but big money to the legatees—\$1,000 to Ev Winkler, \$500 to Lennie Brody, \$500 to Zeb Gray for the building of a church, \$500 each to three distant cousins in Kentucky and one in England, and \$1,000 "and the cabin he lives in to Troy Uley or to his daughter if Troy's time comes before mine."

To Wayne he left all the money on deposit in the Bonanza Bank of Coliseum, all the stock he owned in the bank, all of his real estate in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, and Jack's own personal effects—his guns, his collection of nuggets from the gold-rush days, and his two personal riding horses.

That was a little pitiful to Wayne. Old Jack wanted his son to want these things.

Then Jack had written, "Have \$1,000 put out at interest until time to build a school in Bear Meadows, this money and the interest to be used for building said school, providing it is known as the Staples School, otherwise the money is to go to Zeb Gray's church."

It was the last paragraph that took Wayne's breath:

"Everything else of which I die possessed and which I have not already heired to others above, I leave to Pieta San Juan so she won't have to marry any man she don't want to marry."

Wayne put the papers back in the envelope. He handed the envelope to Joey. It was hard to speak for a moment.

"There, Joey, is a pretty big man."

He walked out of the saloon and stood on the porch a moment, listening to the ringing of an ax up on the ridge. In a moment Joey and Candy came out and stood beside him.

Wayne burst out. "Why did he leave? Why would a man with gall enough to envision a school here run away in the night? He's almost the sole proprietor of this town. It's his! Yet he left it."

"I don't understand it," Joey fretted.

"Neither do I," said Wayne, "but I'm going to. I'm going to Coliseum."

"I'll go with you," Candy said quickly. "I know that trail and you don't."

"All right," Wayne said. "George, take the horses down to Ernie's and give them a good grain feed. I'll meet you here in an hour."

Fern did not seem surprised to see him. She came straight into his arms and her questing mouth found his and he thought, *She does not know what she does to me. . . .* She had changed back to the pink dress and she wore the old soft moccasins without stockings. The sight of her white ankles, the strength of her arms around his neck and the trembling of her slim body against his filled him with a mystical, somehow reverent excitement.

"I've come begging, Fern," he said. "I need food for the trail and Joey thought you'd be kind to a beggar."

Her face showed alarm. "But where are you going now? The pass is closed, Wayne."

"I'm going the other way. I'm in a hurry, dear. I'll tell you everything I know but can you get something—anything—for two men to eat?"

"Come in the kitchen—"

A stilted constraint settled over them as he sat down and drank coffee, as Fern bustled about stirring up the fire and slicing venison and cutting this morning's cold cornbread. Her cheeks were too pink, her voice too shrill, and Wayne understood; for to have her moving swiftly past him in the dress he had bought for her, preparing food he was to eat, was too dangerously intimate and possessive.

"We're almost out of everything," she cried.

"Dad was going over after a deer tomorrow but the Indians told him it's going to snow some more and he probably can't get down to where they winter."

Wayne cleared his throat and made conversation. "How far does he have to go?"

"Over by the lake. He gets a horse from Ernie and hunts for both of them, but last week he had to pack back almost ten miles on foot. You know—the snow drove the deer down too far."

Fern kept talking, talking, talking; and through the door between the kitchen and her bedroom he saw stark poverty. There was no bed—only a wooden bunk nailed to the wall. There was no furniture—only a curtained corner—but then she'd have few things to put away. The walls had been insulated by tacking layer after layer of old newspapers over the siding, between the studs, until the paper padding was almost an inch deep. Over it Fern had pasted pictures, cheap black-and-white prints that were vaguely familiar to Wayne.

Fern finished packing his food and put it in an old canvas saddle-bag. He got up to take it and she put up her lips for a good-by kiss, and memory came rushing back with piercing, painful clarity.

"Fern! Aren't those the prints that used to come as premiums in the flour-barrels?"

She slipped an arm around his waist. "Yes. Your dad gave them to me when you and your mother left. Do you really remember them?"

"Very clearly. I'm glad you got them," Wayne said.

"Come look at them." Fern pulled him through the door.

"No, Fern," he said thickly.

She was a dead weight in his arms. She was crying and shivering and her lips had a strong demanding urgency. He kissed her once and pulled loose and said thickly, "This is all wrong, Fern. I've got to get out of here. Let me go."

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" she wailed.

He held her and let her cry it out. She quieted a little at a time. The trembling of her body stopped. She needed comfort, he thought, not for any specific sorrow but for the general, pervading meagerness of her whole life. She needed many things, but most of all she needed to know that she was alive, that she had value, that she counted in a world where very few things really counted.

She stopped crying and stepped back into the kitchen. "I'm sorry. You'll never see me cry again. It's only that I hate winter so. I couldn't have stood another winter here—without you, I mean."

His last view of her, standing in the doorway, was a strangely poignant one. A dreamy sort of lassitude had dulled both her frank passion and her gaiety. As he hurried down to Joey's place, Wayne wondered if it was the same as his own let-down feeling of having been cheated. He made himself think of other things because if he did not, he knew he would go back and take her.

Candy was waiting with the horses. He was the old edgy, wire-nerved Candy; to be on the move again had stimulated a harsh spirit in him. "Look what time it is! You said an hour. It'll be dark afore we git anyways near the pass."

Candy held them to a still canter. Then pointed ahead of them on the trail. "Look, Wayne—ain't that the Mexican girl?"

Pieta was trudging along with her head down, switching at the brush beside the road with a stick she had picked up. She was wearing boots, a man's pants, a woman's short jacket and a man's old felt hat.

She heard their horses and looked up, startled. Wayne tipped his hat and Candy quickly followed suit. Then on impulse Wayne turned his horse.

"Wait, Candy."

The girl had stopped in the trail, watching them. He did not dismount. "Nothing to be afraid of, Miss San Juan," he said. "I just wanted to tell you I'm going after my father."

He threw his leg over the saddle horn and sat studying her. She returned his bold gaze boldly. Then her long lashes flicked up and her huge black eyes stroked lingeringly over his face.

"Don't bother," Wayne said. "You're not my type."

"Type?" She was a little late in understanding. "Oh, you like nice girls and I'm not a nice girl—is that it? When you kiss a girl you want to be the first."

"Not necessarily first, but I don't care to be too far down the list."

She swore at him. He slid out of the saddle and took her by the shoulders. "Pieta, whatever you're dealing, just pass me. It occurs to me that you and I are a lot alike. We just don't give a damn. I don't know what's wrong, but I wish you'd understand that I have no ill-will at all for you. I am not one of your enemies. How can I make that clear?"

"You don't like me," she said. "You think I'm evil."

"What does it matter what I think? All I want is to find the old gentleman, my father, and help him get what he wants out of life. I'll try to make him see that he ought to offer you marriage. How can I be any fairer? I don't think it will make either one of you happy but if it's what you want, I'm for it. Understand? I'm for it."

He watched the change come over her. Her mouth lost its hard lines. "I've told the truth—he never asked me to marry him and I don't know where he is. I'm sure he had no idea of leaving when he left me that night. That's what makes me afraid."

"Afraid of what? The Orrindorfs?"

"I don't know."

"Did he ever talk to you about dying?"

"No. Oh—he always said he'd leave me a lot of money in his will if I'd let him buy us a house in San Francisco, but I knew better than that."

"I've seen his will. You'll be a rich woman, if he is dead."

Her eyes widened. "Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes!"

"But what about you?"

"I'm not broke. What Pa wants, I want—I've told you that."

She laid a hand on his arm. "You've been my friend, haven't you? Now I'll be yours. Don't give the Orrindorfs a chance to laugh at you."

It was as though he knew what was coming and it was a thing he did not want to hear. "Laugh at me?"

"About Fern. She's still Clarence's girl and always will be—the one you call Dutch."

"You lie!"

Her eyes never left his face. "No, I don't lie. She started the gossip herself. She knew you'd ask her to marry you. Don't you see? She's been Clarence's girl since they were little children and she's like that—she never could be in love but once."

He reached for her. "You lie!"

She did not flinch away from him. She said, "She never could forget the first one and you know

it. If you love her so much, she'll be a good wife to you—but you'd want to know, wouldn't you? Oh—in a way she loves you, but Clarence was her first and a woman like Fern loves that way only once. Can't a man tell by the way a woman kisses?"

Another of those bewildering changes came over her. It was deep and fundamental, in her very tissue. She caught his hand and squeezed it between hers and he saw something in her eyes that he had never believed could be there.

It was pity. "Or is she your first too?" Pieta cried. "That's it, isn't it? Oh, I am sorry for you—sorry from the bottom of my heart! Because you'll never get over your first one either, will you?"

## 11

CANDY TWISTED back and forth between trees, leaving the mail-road when it was drifted shut, returning to it when it opened up. They began climbing, not a steep ascent but steady.

Candy led on. The misery in Wayne settled down to a steady throbbing raw spot. A man could stand this the rest of his life, if he had to. He could even start thinking about it now.

At least she had made him forget what it felt like to kill a man. He had no regrets.

Only—what did he do now?

The snow began falling, the huge, fat, wet flakes typical of this separate world where the weather was made. They pushed on blindly, groping through the snow and thickening darkness. They rode their resentful horses sidewise, with their backs to the icy, penetrating gale. They reached the summit—and from this point it was all downgrade.

They made good time. They rode into Coliseum just before midnight. In the number of houses, this Nevada town was smaller than Bear Meadows, but there was a difference—here the houses were filled with people. There was one big mine and this whole lower slope was cattle country. There were several restaurants and saloons still open. Patches of snow lay here and there but most of yesterday's storm had hit this 4,000-foot elevation as rain.

First they took care of their horses. They ate in a saloon, and here Candy found several riders with whom he had worked last summer. Wayne was afraid that if he left the kid here he would never see him again. He took him along in search of the Bonanza bank.

It was closed but the banker's home was pointed out to them. Wayne stirred him out of bed—a white-haired, ruddy giant of a man who put on hand-stitched, high-heeled boots to answer the door. He sat in his pink nightshirt and boots and tried to remember the details of when he had seen Jack Staples last.

"I've wondered about that. He come to the house here on a Sunday morning and wanted money. I wasn't going to open the bank for nobody but I let him have what I had in the house. About eighty dollars, I reckon. That's the last I seen or heard of him."

"Was he driving a gray team?"

"Yes. That team was nigh foundered, too. That's another thing made me wonder. Jack was always good to horses but them grays had been punished hard."

"He gave you no idea where he was going, or why?"

"No, and I didn't ask. You don't, with Jack."

"How much did he keep on deposit here?"

"I'd have to look but it was usually around thirty thousand."

Wayne whistled. "That much?"

"Jack liked to have money handy in case he got a chance to turn a quick trick. Me and him own this bank fifty-fifty. You think the old man is dead?"

"No, I don't, but he left me in a bad position. I can't even pay off the crew. Can I draw against his account? I'll need money for expenses for myself, too."

"Sure! Tomorrow's mail-day, if the road opens. You can send coin back to Ev Winkler. How is old Ev?" The banker followed them to the street in his nightshirt and boots and stood gossiping sociably. "Try Los Angeles. Jack always liked that town and he's got prop'ty there."

"I just heard that. Does it amount to much?"

"He's got a sizable ranch down on the ocean. There'll be twenty, thirty thousand people in Los Angeles someday, he thinks. If he's right that ranch will be worth money. Me and him used to go down there and hell around them Mexican rodeos till my old lady put a stop to it. Look for him amongst the Mexicans."

"I will," Wayne said.

They got a hotel room and slept the sleep of exhaustion, rising late the next morning. They visited the bank and mailed a small envelope full of gold coin back to Ev. They spent the rest of the day searching for anyone who had seen a fancy gray team and top-buggy.

They found no one. To Wayne's surprise, Candy stayed close to him and he stayed sober. They spent another night in Coliseum and early the following morning they saddled their horses and tied their bedrolls on behind.

This time Wayne led the way. A fairly well-traveled road led south out of Coliseum, winding gradually down to lower levels and hugging the Nevada side of the border. Every few miles they saw mines, some abandoned, a few still running. Here and there were rich-looking cattle spreads, now and then a recently abandoned gold-town, the windows of its buildings still intact but their doors swinging, their interiors gutted by looters.

They slept that night with two brothers, wild-horse hunters in the desert in the winter, Mother Lode-seekers in the summer. The next darkness caught them far from any shelter. They huddled around a fire all night, listening to the doleful chant of the coyotes and sleeping on their haunches in fitful dozes.

Two days later they rode into a lively little cow-town and there, through the rails of a corral, Wayne saw the gray team. It was a commercial stable and freight office. Wayne went in to interview the proprietor, a hard-eyed, lumbering, raw-boned man who leaned on his counter and answered questions curtly. Yes, he had bought the grays, badly run-down, from a man answering Jack Staples' description.

"Where did the man go after he sold it to you?"

"Ketched the stage south," said the freighter. "He was pretty drunk. He sold his watch to the feller that runs the saloon down the street before he came here with his team. Was he kin of yours?"

"A little," Wayne said.

For five days they followed the meandering trail of the stage, at every overnight tavern and meal-stop finding someone who remembered Jack Staples.

On the fifth day the trail ran out. Here Jack had left the stage and for \$10 had bought a worthless pony and saddle. The garrulous old horse-trader who sold them to him had pointed out the eastward trail across the desert.

"I told him not to try to get through by himself but he said to mind my own damn business. Ever seen the Mojave?"

"No," Wayne said.

"Neither've I," said Candy.

"He was pretty old to tackle the Mojave out that old crummy mare. You'll see what I mean. Go take a look."

They took a look.

West of town a low range of barren hills, purple and beige in color, stood like a fortress wall. Above and beyond them hung a vague chocolate-colored haze. A long morning's ride brought Wayne to the wall of low hills. In another hour they broke through a bleak and lifeless pass and reined in. The Mojave lay before them, lit by a bright winter sun.

"Lord Almighty!" Candy said.

Wayne felt sick as he thought of one lonely old man on a broken-down horse trying to cross those endless, lifeless miles. That chocolate haze was the Sierra Nevada; from here Wayne could see its conical white peaks clearly. Up there were rich valleys. Up there grew mighty forests. Up there were high, deep, eternal snowdrifts that defied the sun, and thin air that never slaked the starvation in a man's panting lungs. He knew that country now.

But between him and that white range lay a hundred miles of broken, barren country that rolled and swirled in a million cruel canyons, garish-

ly shining with reds and blues and purples and browns—everything but the living color of green. This was the desert.

They circled Death Valley to the south, threaded the magnificent desolation of the Inyo Slope, and rode down through the Joshua-tree forests behind long trains of mule-drawn wagons. They limped their sore-footed, sore-mouthed horses at last into Los Angeles, and here Wayne's money could buy clothing, food, grain for their horses.

Wayne was no stranger to this sleepy town of 10 thousand. His mother had friends here and Wayne, as a small boy, had often visited stately old homes in the San Gabriel Valley ranchos. That was too far in the past, a thousand years ago, for him to think of now.

At the registrar's office he tracked down the property Jack Staples owned. He shook his head in amazement when he saw it. Hundreds of fat cattle, hundreds of acres of lush winter barley—it was rich, rich! And this place Jack owned without even thinking to mention it to his son.

But no one had seen Jack Staples. The next day they went down into "Old Town," to the Mexican shacks along the waterless river. They worked eastward and outward from here and at last stood on the edge of a newly-leveled field where hundreds of men were digging *zanjas*, or irrigation ditches.

"Want a job?" a man asked them.

"Doing what?" Wayne asked.

"Plantin' orange trees."

"What the hell is an orange tree?" Candy wanted to know.

Between the ditches moved a fine four-horse truck, loaded with tree seedlings. The driver of the team, perched up on a high seat, had his back to Wayne and Candy.

But those burly shoulders were heartbreakingly familiar. It was now 41 days since Wayne and Candy had left Bear Meadows. Wayne caught the Missouriian's eye.

"I'll wait here," Candy said.

Wayne nodded. He could not speak. He crossed the field, and the *zanjeros* leaned on their shovels and watched curiously. He swung up on the back of the truck and picked his way between the seedling trees and laid his hand on the thick shoulder of the driver of the fine four-horse team.

"Hello, Pa," he said.

## 12

JACK STAPLES' fuddy face turned ashen. His eyes blazed and his mouth twisted. "Get away from here!" he grunted at Wayne, trying to shake off his hand. "Get away before somebody sees you!"

Something was wrong. "Take it easy, Pa," Wayne said. "Let's get this straightened out. What's the trouble?"



Jack struck at him. "You always was a fool! Straightened out! I killed my best friend and you want to straighten it out. Why couldn't you leave me alone?"

They had been following the trail of a broken old man, but this was almost the Jack Staples that Wayne remembered. He was thinner and older, but he had found some kind of peace.

Wayne struggled with the great, the incredible, the impossible truth. "You mean Chet?" he cried. "But Pa, Chet Orrindorf is as healthy as the day he was born! He's not dead."

Jack's hand shot out and clutched his wrist. "What?"

"Pa, it's the truth. There's nothing wrong with Chet. Is that what you've been thinking—why you ran away?"

The color returned slowly to his father's face. He clung to Wayne's wrist and said harshly, "You lie! What kind of a trick is this? I knocked him down the tailings-dump. I killed him—killed him over that no-good woman."

The senseless hostility was over, despite all the Orrindorf boys could do to keep it alive—ended by the most hilarious joke life could play on two solemn, self-centered old men. All Wayne could feel for a moment was complete weariness. It was like winning a hard fight. Not even the victory meant much; a man got numb.

"You may have knocked him down but you didn't kill him. Chet thinks he killed you, too. Pa, Chet has aged ten years with that on his conscience."

"But Floyd told me he was dead! Floyd helped me get out of town! He—he said you never wanted to see me again. He wrote me a letter—here, I got it here, I'll show it to you—Ira Silver, that's the name we made up. Look!"

Wayne's elation died. It was not a joke. It was a cruel and pointed betrayal of both old men. He had underestimated Floyd, not just his tenacious stubbornness in going after those winter meadows, but his quickness of mind in how he had handled this situation.

He skimmed the letter quickly:

*Deer Jack, everything is about the same, Earl and Dutch are sore but I am your friend, you know that. Do you need any Munny? Lay low and I'll send you some, Ira Silver, care Post Master L. Angeles.*

*Wayne still don't want to see you agin. Well he won't stand by you in your time of trouble but I will, just lay low till this blows over. Everybody grieves for pa but I no he started it and I am your friend.*

Floyd.

Wayne refolded the letter and handed it back. "Let's go home, Pa. We've been played for fools."

They walked off and left "Ira Silver's" job without a backward look. They sat down in a

Mexican café and ordered food, and Jack Staples told all he remembered of the night of the church supper. He was still dazed and shaken. He kept saying, "Wayne, you wouldn't play a trick on me now, just to get me back? Chet really is alive?"

"It's no trick, Pa."

Hard work and enforced self-discipline had been good for Jack Staples. So had the ordeal of the desert—which for him had been no ordeal at all. He had enjoyed every minute of it, he said. "Them's my kind of people. I like that country. Never knewed I was so tired of snow."

Candy stirred restlessly. "How about the fight?"

"I'll tell you."

After taking Pieta home, Jack had returned for the gray team where Chet Orrindorf, more than a little drunk, was waiting for him. At first Chet talked fairly reasonably, Jack said. No bluster, no name-calling. He just wanted to straighten this thing out man to man.

Jack had dropped the tugs, for safety's sake, when he tied the gray team. He leaned against one of the horses and talked with Chet until he saw it was no use.

"He got mad and started callin' me a woman-stealer. He had that idee in his head and you couldn't get it out; so I started to hook up my team to go. I wasn't going to stand there and talk all night. Chet started to help hitch up but he up and got mad, and I see him swing the end of a tug at me—"

The iron clip on the end of the tug caught Jack over the ear and dropped him. He did not quite go out. He remembered the threshing of the startled horses, the hind feet of one of them flashing dangerously close. He rolled under the buggy with Chet kicking at him. One of the wheels of the light buggy ran over him, frightened him more than it hurt him. He saw Chet looking for him with a chunk of wood. He started around the buggy to take it away from Chet. One of the horses reared and the buggy rolled back against him. He heard the scream of the tire on the rub-iron as the buggy cramped and that was the last he remembered.

"The next thing, Floyd's helpin' me climb back up the tailings-dump. Seems to me it took us hours to get to the top. Floyd said he took the fight start and I reckon he did, because he knowed his pa had hit me with the tug. He said he seen me take that chunk of wood away from Chet and knock him over the edge of the dump. He said I jumped down after him and kicked him to death. He said it wasn't my fault and I ort to get out of town. I told him to go get you and Troy but he 'lowed he was afeared of what Earl and Dutch would do."

"Earl had too much sense and Dutch didn't have the guts to do anything," Wayne said. "You never did actually see Chet after he had that chunk of wood?"

"No, but—"

"It was Floyd had you wait in that sheet-iron shanty?"

"Ves. He said to wait there till he got a chance to help me out of town. He rode a few miles out on the Coliseum road with me to make sure I got off safe. He said he'd tell you where I was, the minute you got back from winter range."

It took no great intelligence to do what Floyd had done—just a little crafty quickness. *He wants those meadows badly*, Wayne thought. Probably Jack had been stunned by that blow on the head with the harness-tug and had not been clear-headed at all after that. With Jack half-senseless from a blow and Chet full of liquor, it took no great guile to convince them that they had killed each other.

"Let's go home," Jack Staples said.

"Then what?"

"I don't know. I don't want no more fights."

"What about the girl?"

Jack shook his head vigorously. "I was a fool. I reckon every man has his second childhood. That was mine."

There was one thing more to be said. "Pa, I made Joey show me your will."

Jack looked startled. "Why?"

"I thought it would tell me where to look for you."

Jack squirmed. "I was out of my mind. I'll change that soon as we get back."

Wayne was tired. He dreaded the long ride home, but Jack said they'd take the train to San Francisco. "Long time since I been on a train. We'll go in style."

"How'll we get through the pass?" Candy wanted to know.

Jack's gray eyes twinkled. "We'll go around it, on snowshoes. I'll learn you young'ns a trick or two."

In San Francisco Jack bought a pair of glasses for Chet. "The old jackass is blind as a bat without his specs. I seen him walk into a bronc once and nearly get his head kicked off. I'll take him these before the old fool kills himself."

That was the old Jack Staples talking. It was a good sign.

They caught a river boat to Sacramento and there took a stage that traveled circuitously north-east, its destination Reno. That evening they got into the snow. The first sight of it brought back the memory of Fern—a whole kaleidoscopic blur of memories. And Wayne wanted to turn and run.

Even the lower-altitude passes to the north were closed, and the stage stopped at the halfway house a thousand feet below timberline. Here the proprietor, an old gold-rush chum of Jack Staples, said he had never seen so much snow in all his years in the Sierra Nevada.

Here Jack bought a rifle and three pair of snowshoes and pack-gear. Here he rented three

horses; and as the stage started its return trip to Sacramento at daylight the next morning, Wayne and Jack and Candy pointed their horses toward the peaks.

By noon they were over their horses' depth in snow. They dismounted, laced on their snowshoes, and shouldered their packs. The horses started back eagerly toward the inn.

Wayne had never worn snowshoes before and, from the look on Candy's face, neither had he. They let Jack take the lead and imitated his movements until they got the hang of it.

They passed the last trees. Still they climbed. Now and then Jack took a practice shot with the rifle. The crack of the gun in the cold, thin air pleased him. He loved guns and skill with them seemed to be born in him. He took no time drawing a bead, but he hit his targets.

Long before dark, Jack began breaking off chunks from the sparse brush that grew above timberline. Wayne and Candy did likewise. By the time night fell they had the fuel for at least a small fire. They spent the night at the very top of the divide, with a freezing wind screaming through the narrow chute over their heads. The snow had been blown away here. The rocky ground lay bare and bleak.

The fire Jack built was an Indian's frugal one. He ate like an Indian, munching whatever was handy from their pack. He could sleep like an Indian too, squatting over the fire with his face relaxed, his breath light and steady.

Candy whispered, "Tough old cuss, ain't he?"

Jack was instantly awake. "I heard some place in Nevada that you'd killed a man," he said. "What was he?"

Wayne told him. He could talk about it freely now. "I ~~told~~ him, I guess. When the time came, I had to shoot in self-defense, but the time would not have come if I had not talked to him like a dog."

"That's a guess," Jack grunted. "The time always comes for them fellers. They make it come. You had luck. Don't push it. Next time it could be you."

"I don't think it makes much difference, Pa. The killer dies, in part, along with his victim."

"You'll get over that. You can't let things lick you."

Something made Wayne's head jerk up. "You've killed a man yourself?"

"Yes." Jack frowned at Wayne a moment and then said, very carefully, "Didn't your mother tell you?"

"No."

Jack laid another small stick on the fire. "I will then. It's a long time ago, though."

Sitting around a fire up there in that shrieking high wind, with a million stars glinting overhead and the Northern Lights flickering faintly at his back, Wayne heard the story of his parents' mar-

riage. Its stresses had been built into it. He had been born of conflict.

He knew that Althea MacAndrews came from a "good" family down on the Coast. He had grown up with them until all his elderly aunts and uncles died and he and his mother alone were left. He knew that the MacAndrews money had run out, that they had been able to keep up the old home in Santa Barbara only because Jack Staples bought it and sent regular drafts from his Sacramento bank. What he had not known, and had always wondered, was how a pretty, vivacious and headstrong woman like his mother could have met, let alone married, a rough, crude, gold-fields adventurer like Jack Staples.

Althea had run off from Santa Barbara with a good-looking New Yorker who posed as the advance agent for a New York syndicate interested in Sierra Nevada mining properties. His name was Harry Neff and apparently he had at least some connection with New York money, because he did sign an option here and there and on some of them, at least, the capital was forthcoming.

But he was a grafter, a parasite, an easy-money shark utterly devoid of principle. He had served a prison term in New York and had a wife and two children in dire want back there. That much came out afterward.

Neff was 30, Althea 17, when they ran away from the MacAndrews rancho, stealing a MacAndrews team and enough MacAndrews money to get them to Sacramento. There Neff refused to marry her. Althea had caught cold and was ill when he took her to a disreputable rooming-house and locked her in, saying that when she got well she should have no trouble making a good living for both of them in the gold-fields.

But he could not resist bragging, and Jack Staples happened to be in Sacramento that night.

Wayne knew what was coming; it was a thing he might have done himself, it was a bull-headed, well-meant blunder like the time he had given Fern Utley money.

Jack heard the story and spent a day verifying it, digging out details in that methodical way of his. He found the rooming-house and bullied the woman who ran it into unlocking Althea's door. The girl was too ill even to know when the strange man came in and looked her over. Jack had her moved to a doctor's house, where the doctor's own wife could nurse her.

That night he baited Neff into drawing the .38 the grafter carried in the waistband of his trousers. He shot Neff between the eyes and there were plenty of witnesses who saw Neff draw first.

The next day Jack took a preacher—the same one who had read the funeral service over Harry Neff—to the doctor's house where he had left the sick girl. With the doctor and his wife as witnesses, Jack Staples and Althea MacAndrews were married. Three days later the doctor said

Althea was well enough to travel, if she had good care.

"She'll have the best," Jack said. He bought a fine carriage and had it converted into a luxury ambulance. He hired a driver and a cook and took along five men on horses to clear and repair a road and, where necessary, build one. Jack rode beside the converted carriage on his horse, never taking his eyes from the sick girl.

They were almost to the top of the pass when Althea looked up from her bed in the carriage at the burly, silent stranger and asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm your husband."

"I wondered if I dreamed it."

She was high in the mountains with a husband she did not know and certainly did not want, a gruff, silent, crude and domineering man twice her age, before she was actually out of her delirium.

Jack Staples had seen a young, pretty, well-bred, spirited woman to be had for the taking—for the simple, offhand act of killing a man. He had seen his chance to beget sons, as Chet Orrindorf had begotten them. Sons were necessities up here in the mountains, like food, warmth and a woman.

"She stuck it out for three years and then I told her go ahead, she might as well go if she wasn't ever goin' to like it. Only then she found out she was goin' to have a baby—you. She allowed she'd try it a while. The funny thing is, we never did fight. She just up and told me one day she wasn't goin' to have you brung up like a damned hard-rock miner or an illiterate cowboy and I could like it or lump it. She told Ev to hook up a team and 40 minutes later she was on her way to'rds the pass."

"I know what was the matter with my mother," Wayne said. "She never got over Neff, did she?"

"I reckon not," Jack said. "Some women just never get over the first one."

They got down to timber the next day, and Jack shot a young bull with his rifle. They feasted that night on fresh liver and slept soundly on a padding of pine needles.

Wayne and Candy had long been lost but Jack trudged on, from landmark to landmark, skimming canyons filled with snow, skirting great open flats where the flat driits lay 30 feet deep. They climbed again, descended again, twisted around steep slopes and climbed and descended again. Toward noon Jack leaned on his rifle and sighed.

"Looks good, don't she?"

It took Wayne a full minute to orient himself so he could recognize Black Bear Valley. They were high on the north slope, above Buckhorn meadow. They had traveled a gigantic circle, half the length of one State and back half the length of another.

He had brought Jack Staples home and now he must see Fern again and make up his mind.

Not until the buildings of the Sliding S came in sight did this actually look and feel like home.

They came down the steep tanyon-side. They took off their snowshoes and carried them through the grove. Jack asked no questions when he saw the grain-fed cattle behind the fence.

Ev was out with the boys, but less than two hours later the whole crew came trooping in. Ev had picked up the tracks of their snowshoes at Buckhorn, where he had gone to check fences. He came in and found Wayne and Jack and Candy still at the table. They had long since finished eating but still they sat there, ghtted with food, tired all over, surfeited at last with warmth.

Ev's contemptuous eyes swept over Wayne and met Jack's. "Howdy," he said. He sailed his hat into a corner and put out his hand to Lennie for a mug of coffee. The other riders bunched uncomfortably in the doorway.

"Howdy, Ev," Jack said. "How'd she go?"

"Jack," Ev said abruptly in an angry, crackling voice, "The Orrindorfs been using our medders while you was away."

"Wayne told me all that," said Jack.

"What you goin' to do about it?" demanded Ev. "They're all in town now."

Jack yawned. "Ev, Wayne has been right about this all along. Me and him can settle this with Chet and Earl in five minutes next spring. Ev, me and Chet hiked into these mountains together with nothin' but a clay-pick and a gold-pan. I don't want to fight with that old fool!"

"But that Mexican woman—"

Jack called Pieta a name. Then he sighed wearily. "It's late but maybe I better go in and see the Orrindorfs."

Wayne sat there feeling heavy-bodied and dull, held not so much by indecision as pure cowardly dread.

But he had to see her sometime.

"I'll go with you, Pa," he said.

Candy's little eyes widened. "Me too," he said.

## 13

IT BEGAN TO SNOW as they reached town. They went at once to Joey Rose's saloon.

As they approached, the saloon door opened and Joey came out, his face tense. His eyes threw Wayne a warning signal. Wayne tried to answer him the same way: *Don't worry!* He did not know whether Joey got it or not because behind him came Floyd Orrindorf, talking to his father in that loudish braying voice of his.

Chet felt his way to the edge of the porch and blinked up blindly at the sky. "Still snowin'. I declare, this is a mis'able winter!" he said, and his petulant voice was deeply pitiful to Wayne.

Jack Staples went up to him. "Howdy, Chet." Chet flinched back. "Is that you, Jack?"

"Yes. Wayne said you busted your spectacles so

I brought you some from San Francisco. Now don't bust these, you damned awkward old fool!"

Chet unrolled the long winding of tissue with fumbling fingers. He put the glasses on and peered down at his old friend. He seemed surprised to see how Jack had aged, just as Jack seemed to be surprised at how Chet had aged.

Jack came a step closer. "Chet, you called me a woman-stealer the last time I seen you. I always made my brag that I'm man enough to own up when I'm wrong. I own up now—I tried to steal your woman. I don't know what got into me but I done it, and I'm sorry. It ain't easy to say but I said it—I'm sorry, Chet."

Chet's mouth worked. "She wasn't my woman, Jack. I wish to God I'd never seen her!"

Floyd was thinking of the winter meadows, of being bottled up in their tiny valley again, of losing this last chance to keep his father nerved up for a fight. He was the hardest, the boldest, the crookedest, the most ruthlessly single-minded of all the Orrindorfs.

Then someone laughed—a sound like the ringing of a little golden bell.

Pieta San Juan and Dutch Orrindorf came down the canyon and around the corner of the saloon. The girl had on a dress of bright yellow silk, low-cut, short-sleeved—a dress like a spot of flaming sunshine in the snow. Her heavy black hair hung down her back, tied with a small yellow ribbon. There was a high choker of pearls around her creamy throat and a tinkling gold bracelet on her wrist.

Her hips swayed. One hand touched Dutch's arm lightly, the other held her skirts just high enough to betray the yellow slippers she wore and the gold chain that encircled one slim, bare, tawny ankle. She was all gold—dress, ribbon, shoes, bracelet, anklet. Even her skin was gold.

She was dressed for summer, and it was winter. She was the great illusion—the Mother Lode, eternal wealth, eternal warmth, eternal spring. The two cold old men stood in the snow and stared at her and forgot they were friends again. To Wayne, the ironically cruel thing was that Jack Staples had bought Chet Orrindorf the spectacles that let him see this woman. The queer thing was that Wayne should suddenly remember Johnny Cuesta, and grow weak again with the horrible sickness that had followed his killing.

*Poor Dutch*, he thought.

Dutch did not want to do this but the girl had made him do it. Wayne had come close to winning. He had almost kept the peace, but there were no measures a man could take against a bright golden girl who offered two cold old men the great illusion of eternal wealth, eternal spring. Wayne saw the ugly black look, fierce and murderous and primitive, sweep back over his father's face.

Jack's voice rasped out: "*Dutch!*"

Dutch turned white and staggered backward

away from the girl. Pieta looked at Jack and saw what she had done. She put her hands to her cheeks and began screaming, one insane scream after another.

Floyd Orrindorf saw his chance. One excuse was as good as another to this most single-minded of all the Orrindorfs. The girl meant nothing to him, but the winter meadows did. He saw his chance and took it. He pulled his elbows back and his hands opened to claw at his guns.

"Dutch—I'll handle this—get back!" he shouted. "Jack, you make one move and I'll blow your head off."

He called Jack Staples a filthy name. Jack was a split-second late in understanding that Floyd meant to kill him no matter what happened. His grizzled head swung up and he stared at Floyd on the porch with a puzzled look in his eyes. The girl kept on screaming and Wayne fought the sickness in him, but he knew that this screaming golden girl had already murdered his father.

And then George Candy crouched and flung out his arm. His mean eyes had a happy glitter in them, as though life had finally found time to give him some important thing. His voice slid up stridently, pulling Floyd around to face him like a jerked wire.

"No you don't, Floyd—don't try it, Floyd—keep your hands away from them—*ah-h-h-h!*"

He let Floyd get his hands on his guns. Wayne never did see Candy's motion but suddenly his gun was barking. That thin kid was braced against its recoil, crouched like a spider with his good-looking face taut with joy.

Floyd dropped both guns. His knees buckled. The holes in his chest welled two thick streams of blood. He pitched off the porch into the snow on his face. He rolled half over and did not move.

Pieta San Juan bunched her skirts in her hands and began running up the canyon. Wayne followed her, thinking, *I'll kill her. I owe this to Johnny Guesta because he was the wrong one—I killed the wrong person.* . . .

The girl leaped for the stepping-stones across the creek. The yellow slippers slipped on the mushy fresh snow and she went into the icy creek to her hips. Wayne almost got his hands on her, but Pieta was young and quick and strong, and she had nerve. She scrambled up the bank on her hands and knees, her teeth chattering, the sodden yellow dress clinging to her legs. She turned on her knees to face him.

Her arm flashed and a rock as big as a door-knob hit Wayne on the cheekbone, turning the world dark. By the time he could see again, she was out of sight. That ugly little dog of hers barked. A door slammed.

He started walking up the canyon. At Troy Utley's house he remembered a thing he had yet to do, but not today. There were no tracks in the snow there, no smoke from the chimney. Fern had

gone over to the lake after a deer with her father. No doubt Dutch Orrindorf had strutted back and forth past this little lonely cabin, with Pieta on his arm, until it was more than she could stand.

He knew he would never see this girl's like again. Fern had a grand simplicity of nature. She probably did not even know that she loved a loutish coward. Or perhaps she saw in Dutch a thing no one else had ever seen because Dutch was ashamed, and kept it hidden—a basic gentleness of nature, a simple, decent tenderness.

No man could hate Dutch. That anguish twisted his guts again as he walked on up the canyon. He knocked at the Rodriguez front door. Inside, the vile little dog snarled until Rodriguez cursed it in Spanish.

Rodriguez opened the door, round-eyed but not afraid. "What do you want?" he asked, with some dignity.

"I want to see Pieta," said Wayne.

"Are you going to kill her?"

Wayne was too tired. He said, "I guess not, but I want to see her. I guess I lost my nerve but I'm still going to see her."

Rodriguez threw back the door. He pointed to an inner door and said, "In there. I hope you will do what needs to be done. Pieta would be a good girl with a strong hand on her neck."

The dog nipped at Wayne's ankles. He picked it up and handed it to Rodriguez and said, "Keep that damned thing out of my way."

He did not even knock at Pieta's door. He opened it and went in. The girl had taken off her outer clothing. Her petticoat was half down and her teeth were chattering. Her black hair was tumbled about her face and bare breasts. Her eyes went blank with terror. She pulled the petticoat up and shrank back against the wall.

He started across the room toward her. He kicked a chair out of his way and it fell against her dresser and rattled the chimney of her unlighted lamp.

The harsh sound mobilized something in her. The fear went out of her eyes. She tossed her head.

"Get out!" she said contemptuously, not bothering to raise her voice. "Get out of my room! Where do you think you are?"

His open hand caught her across the mouth, hard. It was something he had wanted to do for a long time.

Her head hit the wall and her knees buckled, and she went down.

In the open closet hung the short jacket she had worn out on the Coliseum trail, the day he had heard about Dutch and Fern. He threw it to her.

"Put that on, and get up."

She put the jacket on with a look in her eyes that suddenly, treacherously broke his heart. No man, he was sure, had ever seen her look like that—whipped, frightened, docile, tame.

He knelt down, put his hand on her shoulder. "I wish you'd tell me why you did it," he said. "You're tough and brave and smart. You're not a quitter, but when a girl like you wants a rich old man for a husband, that's quitting. Why did you do it?"

"A man," she said.

"Was he your first one?"

"Yes."

"What happened?"

"He was no good. Just no good."

"But you still never got over it, because he was your first."

"Yes."

"That's how you knew about Fern. You're that way too."

"Yes."

He cupped her chin in his hand. "We're in the same boat, Pieta. We'll never get over the first one, will we?"

"No. I won't and you won't either, till you die."

"Don't you think we ought to get out of town? We've caused enough trouble."

"Yes."

He helped her to her feet. "You're a great girl, Pieta. You're the finest girl I have ever known. You make big mistakes but you own up big. Get a few things together—just a small pack."

Her eyes showed fright again. "This late?"

"Don't be afraid, Pieta. This storm won't amount to much and I know where we can camp tonight. We'll be in Coliseum tomorrow."

"Then what?" she cried. "Are you going to marry me? I won't go if you don't. *Madre de Dios*, I can't stand any more—I can't stand any more! I'm scared, I'm scared, I'm scared!"

Their faces were very close together. "I'll marry you," he said, "and it may work out better than you think. We can help each other. Why do we say we can't get over the first one? We will get over it."

Her eyes clung to his eagerly. "All right."

"There's nothing you and I can't do, Pieta. Pick out a few things, now, and make a saddle roll. Do you know how?"

"Yes."

"I'll be back in half an hour."

He passed the little Utley cabin, the clean snow still untracked, the chimney still cold. He passed the place where he had played with Fern when they were small children. He crossed the creek and saw his father and Joey Rose standing at the corral, talking together. Joey shook his head at Wayne, a silent warning signal: but Jack Staples had to take his licking too.

"Pa, where's George?" Wayne asked him.

"In there liquorin' up. His guts are on fire—but I reckon you know. Why?"

"I want his horse. That kid has no business drinking."

Jack grunted. "Kid? He's as old as you. What do you want with his horse?"

"Pa, I'm leaving town. I'm taking Pieta with me."

The girl's name evoked nothing in Jack. He said, "Where'll you go?"

"Back East to study medicine."

It was not what he had planned to say. It just came out of its own accord as he came to the point where he could no longer waste his life just putting in time.

"It's something I should have done long ago," he went on. "You shouldn't have stopped me from doing it."

Jack rubbed his face wearily. "What'll I do without you? I need you, son!"

"Make a son of George Candy. Give him the chance I didn't want—the chance you never gave me. He's a good boy and now he knows something that he needed to know. I've got one more thing to do. Where's Dutch Orrindorf?"

"They just took Floyd's body up to Zeb's," Joey Rose said sharply. "You can't horn in there now."

"All right, I won't," Wayne said. "Joey, give him the brooch and the pearls. See that he uses them. Tell him that if he mistreats her, I'll come back here and horsewhip him clear through the pass."

Joey's eyes lighted. "He won't mistreat her. He'll spend the rest of his life thanking his lucky stars he got off so well. Wayne, I'd like to shake hands with you before you go."

Jack Staples was just an old, tired, bewildered man. "So would I," he said.

They did not make camp in a cave until long after night had fallen, but the snow had stopped, there was a full moon, and travel was easy.

First he made a bed for her. Then he tied the horses and gave them the feed of barley he had brought from Ernie Sabo's place.

Wayne built a big roaring fire close to the overhanging rock. By now he knew exactly what was needed on the trail. He had brought fried beef, a can of coffee needing only to be warmed up, and a small flask of whiskey. When his gun got in his way he took it off and hid it under Pieta's pillow.

They drank a little whiskey and then he warmed the beef over the fire, and they ate together.

Afterward she went into the cave. He thought she went straight to sleep then, but he had no sooner settled down on his haunches beside the fire when he heard her voice.

"Won't you be cold out there?"

"No—I'll be coming in after a while."

"All right. But don't—don't be too long."

Wayne smiled in the firelight. "No," he said, half to himself. "I've been too long already. . . . Much, much too long."

He began to bank the fire. —By JOHN REES



**Bluebook's January Contest Movie:  
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea**

by Paul Faron

## What would YOU do?...



... if you could save your own life but would leave two of your shipmates to die? Your brief answer may win you \$10.

Paul Lukas faces that problem in Walt Disney's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. A brilliant madman, James Mason (*below, right*), has secretly built the *Nautilus*, the world's first successful submarine, which he is using in a twisted plan he believes will save the world. Hunting this mysterious underseas raider, Lukas and two companions, Kirk Douglas and Peter Lorre, are captured and taken aboard. Mason decides to spare Lukas' life since Lukas is a scientist and can be useful to him, but he orders the other two put on deck to drown when the submarine submerges.

Lukas refuses to live while his friends die. Mason lets him join them on deck, and ship starts to submerge (*below, left*). At the last moment, Mason changes his mind and the three are brought inside. Then the *Nautilus* begins a fantastic journey around the world—underwater. Lukas is amazed at the magnificent sights and at the *Nautilus* itself, a work

of genius, able to remain submerged indefinitely, operated by the dynamic power of the universe. But he is horrified when Mason, with no sign of emotion, sinks a ship, killing the entire crew.

While Lukas, Douglas and Lorre are plotting to escape, the *Nautilus* goes through one violent adventure after another. There's a battle with a giant squid that has tentacles 70 feet long (*above*). Douglas hurls a harpoon between its eyes, the most vital spot, just as it's about to draw Mason into its evil parrot-like beak. Mason is grateful for having his life saved and reveals his plan to share his secrets with the world. At that moment, however, a fleet of warships is sighted and the film moves to an exciting conclusion.

Paul Lukas gives one answer to: What would you do if you could save your own life but would leave two of your shipmates to die? Your own reply may win a prize if you write it in 25 words or less on a postcard and mail it before January 31, 1955 to Paul Faron, BLUEBOOK, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. The best answer wins \$10.



October contest winner:

Mr. Henry J. Orgel, 3331 Harvard, N.W., Canton, O.



## NEXT MONTH'S **Bluebook**

*One of the most exciting books in years, "The Day Lincoln Was Shot" by Jim Bishop, is next month's book-length feature. This suspense-filled, remarkable book is the February 1955 selection of The Book of the Month Club... Other top stories and articles!*